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Isekai Mahou wa Okureteru! [LN]

The Different World Magic Is Too Far Behind!

vol.2

by Gamei Hitsuji

[Novel Updates](#)

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Prologue

In this world, there is a relatively new, conspicuous and unique magic system even when looking at it from magic's long history called modern magic theory. Its origin dated back four hundred years to the 17th century. It took in the theory behind all magic and gathered them altogether as a single foundation.

In general, a single magic system was based on a single magic theory. Among scholars this was common sense. There was only a single origin behind ideology and history, this also applied to religion. It was common to create magic by mixing similar systems such as Kabbalah, star divination and numerology. However a theory born from mixing together fundamentally different ideologies never happened. Witchcraft and Ying and Yang spells among others were established by the combination of magics from similar systems. That magic systems could only be used if they shared a founding theory was in general an unbreakable law.

In that case, magic had no choice but to confine itself to a certain scope. It could be said that its general nature was lacking. It became obvious that magic would have to develop to mix together magic from different foundations to develop further. Because of this the evolution of magic had been forced to a standstill.

The ultimate goal of many magicians was the Akashic Records. In a word, the truth. It was called the ultimate gate of the highest order which could never be crossed. The magicians at the time thought that their evolution had to continue simply to chase after this dream. Thus, the magicians in 16th century had come up with the theory of gathering together all magicians with the goal of unifying all magical theory. They would fill in the gaps of magic and complete it. If they could pursue this theory without any sense of reality, magic could possibly take on a much more complete shape. With this thought in mind the magicians of the time had put their plan into action.

What was born out of this excessively absurd and unprincipled thought was a magic formed together by the joining of magics from different systems:

'modern magic theory'. The ones who wielded this magic had become modern magicians. They were magicians who had become heretics among the magicians themselves.

And right now, in the present era, one of these modern magic theory wielding modern magicians was here in this place. He was seeing a dream of him holding his mother within his arms unable to push aside his sorrow. He was unable to protect his mother as his meagre desire came to an end. This magician had lost his father and inherited his father's dream. Since then, the young man had thrown his body into distressful situations on numerous occasions.

The goal the young man was chasing after... the goal his father had desired was by no means large, but a simple meagre desire. Thus for his father who surpassed him as a magician many times over, it should not have been a particularly difficult dream to accomplish. However, the young man's father never did accomplish his desire which anybody should have been able grant, that small dream. To see those around him smile. For only a few people, a modest never-ending happiness. To his father, it was not something that he considered only he could accomplish. That's why on that day, when the young man heard his father's wish, he had told him that he would work together with him to accomplish it...

If a bird does not too fly too high, it would not fall so far. It would not taste despair, and its body would not be destroyed, spilling its blood onto the earth. The young man's father told him that if he was looking for happiness, he should definitely not chase after him. However the young man did not listen to his father. He was already enchanted by his father's back. The back that was always in front of him chasing after mysteries and dreams. He would chase after the same things as the one who held that back, he would become a magician just like him. One day, he would grant his wish. And so the young man kept running. He believed that what his father's wished, the end of the dream would definitely come if he followed that path... And then, that young man was now in a completely different place unrelated to that dream.

He was not in the modern world, but in a world that young men and women often fantasized about. There were heroes and a Demon Lord, a fantasy world where swords and magic were the norm. The things that he aimed for, that he

desired, that he swore to, that he should protect were all not here in this place.

He had separated himself momentarily from the world of rampant blood thirst and magicians, and was resting, spending time as a normal student on that day. And on that day he had been summoned against his will along with his friends with the request to subjugate the Demon Lord thrust before them. He had refused the request and separated from his friends who had accepted it. Because the young man had his own goals, he could not accompany them. He must accomplish his departed father's wish. To keep his promise, he must return to his own world. Thus on the day that the young man left the castle, his first destination was a place where many adventurers gathered.

“— Hi. Sorry, but do you often use the Twilight Pavilion?”

As the young man was waiting before the reception desk of the adventurer's office known as the Twilight Pavilion, a graceful voice rang out next to him. A voice filled with courtesy and a pleasant tone. The owner of the voice was the young woman who had been waiting in line next to him. She had deep crimson hair like the evening sun and a gallant figure as she turned towards the young man. Her white face gave off a sharp gaze like a blade that had been covered in blood. Both her features and clothing were elegant. She wore a hat with a wide brim and light armour befitting of a knight with a white tone accentuated in red highlights. Her figure was slender, it was likely that underneath her armour were graceful limbs. She was such a beauty that the young man unintentionally let out a sight.

From her posture sitting on the stool, he could grasp that she held herself calmly with composure. If he were to compare her to something, she would be a quiet sword. Though the young man had only touched upon swordsmanship, he could tell that she had no openings before her. She must have been quite the skilled master. From her physique and figure he had thought her to be approximately the same age as him. However she gave off a mysterious aura that would lead one to think otherwise. The young man did not expect her to call out to him, and answered with a slight hesitance in his voice.

“No, just the opposite. To tell you the truth, this is my first time here.”

“What a coincidence. Just like you this is my first time coming to this sort of

place. I was a little worried whether this was the correct line up to apply as a member.”

“In that case I don’t think there is a problem. The people accepting commissions all seem to be using counters other than this one after all.”

The young man pointed towards the corner of the building where many were busy drinking merrily away. Next to them was another counter where what appeared to be much more frequent visitors to the establishment were gathering around.

“Could you also be applying as an adventurer?”

“Yeah. Though it is embarrassing, I am a woman who only knows how to fight. I thought that this would be the most suitable place for me to earn a living.”

The young woman tapped the hilt of the sword at her waist while giving the young man a self-deprecating smile. As the young man had guessed, she was one who lived by the sword. It should be obvious from seeing the long sword at her side, but rather than looking like a soldier, she looked more like a knight. While pondering such things, the young woman suddenly named herself.

“I am Lefille Grakis. If it is alright with you would you tell me your name?”

“Huh?”

At the sudden request to exchange names, the young man raised a puzzled voice. Seeing this, the young woman – Lefille – made an awkward expression and explained herself.

“Ah, sorry. I’m sure you’re confused about me asking for your name, but there is actually a reason for this.”

“... What is it?”

“You don’t have to be so on guard. This morning when I went to the Salvation Church, I was nominated to receive an oracle from Alshuna. It told me to exchange names with the people near me today.”

Lefille gave an annoyed look as she sighed. The Salvation Church was the place of worship for the one and only God of the land, the Goddess Alshuna. In this world it is the religion with the most believers. While in the audience

chamber it was also an oracle which had given out details about the Demon Lord and their actions.

“Why would you get that sort of revelation?”

“I also have no idea. According to Metel’s bishop, Alshuna’s oracle simply stated that someone I call out to near me today will in one way or another become involved with me. “

“And that’s why you asked for my name?”

“Exactly.”

“An oracle huh. It’s quite the dubious story... Sorry, that was rude of me.”

The young man had let out his honest feelings after hearing about the extremely abstract oracle and quickly apologized. She who had gone to pray must also be a believer of the Salvation Church. Making that sort of statement in front of her was simply careless. He was condemning himself for such a failure, however Lefille returned a gentle laughter.

“Fufu, that’s certainly right, but you should be careful. I don’t particularly mind, but if more devout believers heard that you would be in for a tedious sermon.”

“I’ll be careful. I was rather rash.”

“Well, I might not be in a position to say such a thing after raising an objection as soon as I heard the oracle myself.”

“Eh...?”

The young man inadvertently began staring at the face sitting beside him. In other words the tedious sermon that she had been talking about earlier was a fresh experience from this very morning.

“Really, to think that my usual prayer would turn into such a thing. Thanks to that my schedule has fallen quite a bit behind.”

“You have my sympathy.”

“Well, I’m paying for my own mistakes. There’s no sense complaining about it.”

“So you’ve been following the contents of that oracle and been doing this all day?”

“Yeah, you would be the tenth person.”

“That’s just... awfully troublesome.”

“It really is. If I explain that it was about the oracle, they think I’m just a strange person... Also, there were some who thought I was giving them some sort of vulgar invitation.”

“Aah...”

The young man gave out a mumble like he understood fully as Lefille let out a gloomy sigh. He did not know for sure about seeing her as a strange person. But if a girl as beautiful as her were to call one out, and on top of that ask for one’s name, unless it was a very wary person, any man would think she was trying to seduce them and would be in awfully high spirits. Her heavy sigh was surely because she had to unravel such a misunderstanding on multiple occasions.

“So, how about it? If is alright with you I would like to hear your name.”

And so, the young man decided it wouldn’t be a problem to name himself and spoke.

“Suimei Yakagi.”

This was the meeting between the modern magician, Yakagi Suimei and Lefille Grakis.



Chapter 1 - Do not Forget the Promise Made at the Adventurer's Guild

It was a few moments before Suimei met Lefille. For the purpose of returning to his own world, he had departed from Astel Kingdom's royal castle Camellia and was now standing before the main street of the capitol city Metel. After leaving the castle, Suimei had headed straight for a clothing store. He had purchased clothes for the purpose of walking around town normally and was now completely relaxed.

“... Alright, no matter how you look at me, I'm now completely a normal citizen.”

After confirming that he perfectly blended in with the people around him, Suimei let out a sigh of relief. It had left him quite uncomfortable to walk around in his school uniform in the middle of a town and people who looked straight out of Middle Ages Europe. For this reason, once he had noticed the gazes of others, Suimei had headed immediately towards a clothing store. He had originally intended to sell his schoolbooks first, however he changed his plans and instead used the money he received from the prime minister Gless to buy clothing. Suimei used the surrounding youngsters around his age as reference and bought clothing to match them. They were definitely normal clothes, however they weren't quite comfortable to wear. It should be obvious when compared to modern clothing, but the more important factor for Suimei was to blend in.

“So, next is the Adventurer's Guild...”

As Suimei adjusted the sleeves on his new clothes, he began heading towards his next destination, the Adventurers' Guild. His next goal after buying new clothing was to obtain identification papers. It was great and all that he had left the castle to live on his own, however his current situation was no different from a vagrant. In this case many inconveniences would come up in his travels. Just like in the modern world, even the fantasy world held the concept of identification. However, unlike the modern world, they could only judge

another by their identification and outer appearance. A lack of proper proof of identity would be a far more lethal mistake than in modern society.

Since Suimei was intent on leaving Astel, it was not something he necessarily needed right away. However if he was in a situation where he could attain one, then he believed he should do just so. According the books from Camellia's archives, unlike other guilds, it seemed that the Adventurer's Guild allowed anybody to register. For the other guilds – such as the Merchant's Guild and the Craftsman's Guild – it was generally necessary to have prior experience and a reference to register. However the Adventurer's Guild did not require any of that. It was an organization which only required the clothing on one's back – though that may be putting it a little bluntly. Basically as long as one had the ability to do the work, anybody was fine.

However to prevent it from becoming a job with no guarantees, if one were not trusted than the jobs entrusted to them would be trivial. Since pretty much only dangerous jobs are requested of the guild, it was obvious that a normal person would have no place in taking on any requests. Suimei also had the alternative of going to the Mage's Guild, however in the case of an emergency they were used as a military force for the country. This did not match up with Suimei's intentions. Therefore the only place he could acquire a guild card from was the Adventurer's Guild.

(I ended up following the standard route in the end huh...)

As Suimei was absentmindedly thinking of such things and walking down the street, he had arrived at a place which seemed to be the Adventurer's Guild. In front of him was a building which, much like the other buildings in the area, was a two-story wooden building. On the front of the building, a large placard with the words Twilight Pavilion written on it was placed above the door like some sort of restaurant or bar. In front of the door was two guards in plate mail. The construction of the building did not differ much from the other buildings, however the amount of space it occupied differed greatly.

This city from another world was surrounded by a twenty metre tall wall to defend against invading monsters and foreign aggressors and prevent them from easily entering. Because of the wall, the amount of land allocated to the town was restricted. Therefore the buildings were quite depressingly cramped

together and each building was not allotted much land. Upon seeing the amount of space the Adventurer's Guild occupied, one could understand just how important it was to the country.

Upon looking at his surrounding, Suimei could see that unlike the other neighbourhoods he had been walking through, this area was sparsely populated by dangerous looking people. It was just like characters out of games or anime from armoured men dressed like warriors to slender male and female mages wearing robes much like Felmenia's. There were even men carrying large claymore like swords. In modern Japan they would all be people who would be arrested for violating the swords and firearms control law. However in this world they were all considered objects necessary to their livelihoods.

Suimei found this a little comforting. Just from stepping into this territory, he was able to savour a slight tingling in the atmosphere. To feel like this from just being in the middle of town was quite refreshing. After finishing gazing at his dangerous surrounding, Suimei headed towards the door to the Twilight Pavilion. The two guards standing on each side of the door had not said a single word to stop him, so it seemed that this was the correct place after all. One of the guards gave Suimei a nod and raised his hand to invite him in. Taking them up on their invitation, Suimei opened the door and headed inside.

And so, inside this establishment which was frequently talked about in fantasy worlds, was a layout which seemed to suggest it had formerly been a bar. Though aside from the Middle Ages themed bar where they served alcohol, there were also general goods stores and assembly areas. Surely the bar had become the Adventurer's Guild. Suimei was pondering about whether or not this was the case as he headed further into the building. The Twilight Pavilion truly was close to the image he had in his head.

In the front there was a reception desk where clients seemed to be consulting with the guild staff along with a bench to line up for it. At the side were what appeared to be informational magazines as well as a bulletin board with requests pasted all over it. And then occupying the majority of the hall was the layout resembling a bar. There were tall circular tables and lower long tables for larger groups. In the corner was a mountain of oak barrels. Despite it being quite early in the day, dangerous looking types were noisily drinking away what

appeared to be beer and wine.

(It's still the middle of the day and they're all getting drunk. It's not like there is some sort of event going on.)

Suimei was making a small voice in either admiration, exasperation or a mix of both. As he was doing so he went further in while looking to the side. As he arrived at the long bench before the reception desk he spotted instructions posted along with writing materials on a table. Suimei followed the posted instructions and headed towards the end the queue, and there — he encountered the crimson haired girl, Lefille Grakis.



— As Suimei named himself at Lefille's request, she had bowed her head down quickly.

"I see, Suimei-kun right? Sorry for having you go along with this incomprehensible oracle."

"No, I don't mind. But are oracles from the Salvation Church something that happens often?"

"Yeah, that's right. I go to the church quite a lot and once in a while received an oracle which left things at my discretion. However it is rare for the oracle to be such a concrete matter like this time, I wonder what is the deal with that?"

"Heehh..."

As she sighed about her ordeal, Suimei uttered a small breath in neither admiration or indifference. He recalled that the church's revelation had also informed the whole country to take action. And now a revelation was also directed to guide a single person. He could not tell whether these subjects whose goals could not be understood were simply the whims of a god or the hobby of the one giving out the oracles. In any case, as long as the oracles were not a simple scam by the bishops, it was possible that it was some sort intervention from a paranormal existence using spiritualism as a foundation, or it could be something closer to divination or fortune telling.

"With such a revelation there's no way to tell what will happen right?"

“Really. It bothers me that I have truly no understanding of what the Goddess is thinking of.”

“Wasn’t it dangerous to speak of such things?”

“The thickheaded bishop isn’t here. Also the Goddess would surely forgive such a small — ”

“Will the next person please come up?”

In the middle of Suimei and Lefille’s conversation, a voice called out to them from the reception desk. Now that they took a look, the one who had been sitting beside Lefille was not there anymore. It did not need to be said who the next person she was referring to was.

“It seems that my turn has come.”

“That’s right, take care.”

“Yeah, I hope that your commission gets quickly resolved.”

As Suimei was seeing her off, she returned these words as she walked towards the reception desk.

“...?”

Suimei was wondering just why she would say such a thing. While he was pondering on this mystery, after a small conversation with the receptionist, Lefille began filling out some documentation and was then led through a door further into the building. It was probable that she was going to be interviewed by someone else further inside. The reception then called out for the next person in line. As he heard the voice calling him over, Suimei stood up and walked to the counter.

“— Welcome to the Adventurer’s Guild, the Twilight Pavilion’s Metel Branch... Ummm, is this your first time coming here?”

“You can tell?”

“Yeah, you’ve been looking around the guild for some time now like you were interested in all sorts of things. The first time people come here they are all like that. So, what is the nature of your request today?”

“No, I’d like to register please.”

As Suimei said this, the receptionist seemed to have misheard him.

“... What?”

“Sorry, I’d like to register as a guild member please.”

“U-umm, could you please repeat that one more time?”

“Like I’ve been saying, I’d like to register as a guild member please.”

Was it perhaps that she was bad of hearing? Even after repeating the same phrase three times, the receptionist for some reason was putting on a grim expression. She began to rub her brow with her fingers and after a short while let out large sigh as she began speaking in a polite yet irritated tone.

“Umm... Excuse me, but are you saying such a thing while being aware that this is the Adventurer’s Guild the Twilight Pavilion?”

“That’s right, is there something strange?”

“Umm, everything is strange right?”

“...?”

Suimei could feel a cold breeze at the sudden change in personality from the previously approachable and polite receptionist. He had now idea what was going on. As if to push Suimei further away, she even threw in a warning.

“... If you’re screwing around, I would like to ask you to take back your words quickly. I don’t have so much free time that I could stand here bantering and listening to your jokes.”

She had suddenly gotten angry. It was strange. Why was this? According to the pattern from the novels he had seen from Mizuki, registering at the guild was a quick affair where after a short conversation he would receive his registration immediately. Certainly it wouldn’t go exactly like it did in fiction, but Lefille had also just registered without any issues coming up. Just what was different between the two of them? While Suimei was trying to figure out what kind of mistake he had made to irritate the receptionist to such an extent, he noticed the presence of someone approaching him from behind.

“Oi, kid.”

“...?”

A bold and angry voice came from behind him, as he turned around to face it he saw a large man about ten to twenty centimetres taller than he was standing there. The man gave off a clear impression of a warrior. He started speaking to Suimei in an overpowering, angry voice.

“You... You just said you wanted to register right?”

“Y-yeah. That’s right...”

“I see. If you admit that what you said was a joke right here I’ll let you off. So get out of my sight and go home.”

It was another warning, or rather a final warning. The veins on the man’s forehead were popping out visibly as he vented his anger at Suimei. However Suimei still did not understand what the problem was and could not possibly just leave at this point. Registering at the guild was his first step into this world. It was something he must do no matter what. For that reason Suimei decided to act in a way to not further stimulate the man before him and took on an amicable attitude.

“Like I’ve been saying, I really do want to register like the girl who had just done so before me.”

“Are you seriously saying that you prick? With that kind of spindly body, are you saying that you can fight on the same level as us?”

“Yeah.”

It should have been obvious. If Suimei did not have at least that much confidence in himself he would not have come here. It would be a different story if he was joking around like they were implying earlier, but that was not the case here. Also there were plenty of mages around, his body should be a completely secondary concern, it did not make any difference that he was slim. The things that this man was saying to him just didn’t seem to line up correctly. The man seemed extremely dissatisfied at Suimei’s nonchalant reply and had become even angrier as he made a grand display.

“D-don’t screw around and bark out such stupid shit you brat! This is a place where warrior and mages gather! It isn’t a place for a punk like you who is a complete stranger to fighting to step into you hear me!?”

“Mu? Even I have a reasonable amount of experience with fighting...”

Suimei was deep in thought. As he was talking, he had finally realized that something was wrong. He remembered just what that man had said, warrior and mages. It was certain that this was a place where those types gathered. There should have been no problems there. The problem was just how they judged people to fit into one of these two categories, this was the important point that he had overlooked.

“Warrior and mages you said, I’m also... AAAH!?”

As he repeated the words that came out from the man’s mouth, Suimei finally came upon the answer. Just a short while ago, he had bought brand new clothes to blend in as a perfectly normal citizen. Of course these clothes were chosen to match the people who lived everyday peaceful lives within the city. They were clothes worn by people who had nothing to do with violence. Now just imagine if someone dressed like that walked into the Adventurer’s Guild claiming they wanted to register. Thinking about it normally their reaction was quite natural and correct. This was another world. Unlike Suimei’s world, the people here could only judge others by their external appearance. Suimei had completely forgotten just what it was that he was wearing.

“— Dammit. It’s the clothes. I completely got carried away with the clothes I bought...”

It was far too late for Suimei to let out a sigh at his failure. All that stood before him was a gaze filled with hostility and anger, and the relentless, pitiless eyes of the surrounding crowd.



Currently, Yakagi Suimei’s situation could be explained in a single phrase: ‘not very good’. The previously cheerful receptionist was now scowling at him angrily. The man before him was now shaking due to his irrepressible anger. Even in his surroundings, people who appeared to be guild members were slowly gathering as they bantered between one another while making fun of

him.

(Uwaaa, I really magnificently screwed this up...)

Suimei let out a groan as he had truly and completely messed up on such a grand scale. To be honest, he had completely forgotten about his outer appearance. Certainly after having it pointed out to him, it should have been obvious. He had chosen to look as ordinary as possible, so his figure truly did look like it had absolutely nothing to do with violence. On top of that he also had the generally slender figure of a Japanese man, it was not strange that those who saw him would assume he was unable to fight.

Suimei's lack of understanding with regard to this world's standards had completely backfired in his face. In his own world fighting techniques and tools were a dime a dozen. Having a good body build was only a slight advantage. Because of this fact, he had not noticed the trap before him. This was without any doubt his own mistake. However, it was also true that he could not just give up on the registration and back off like they were telling him to. He had to obtain a guild card for purposes of identification and was also hoping to find some proper lodgings as well. However even if he went and bought a weapon and returned, it would certainly be of no use. They had all definitely remembered his face now that things have escalated so, if he left and returned later they would surely just send him back again. Suimei was thinking up a plan on just how he would break out of this deadlock as the man engulfed in anger began moving towards him.

"... Hey punk, you have confidence in your skills right?"

"I did say something similar to that earlier on, but if I didn't have any confidence in myself I would not be standing in this place."

"I see. In that case, I'll put your skills to the test."

The man seemed to have reeled in his anger as he said this and reached for the large sword on his back. Seeing this, the receptionist suddenly started to panic as she tried to restrain him.

"Pl-please wait a moment! No matter how far he's..."

"It doesn't matter. This guy also said he came here to seriously register

right?”

“H-however it is strictly prohibited by the guild for a member to carelessly resort to violence against a citizen!”

“Nope, this ain’t just careless violence. Besides the guild prohibits violence against regular citizens. This guy is a registration candidate, so he ain’t just an ordinary citizen. In that case, there should be no problems giving him a little test right here right?”

“That... certainly may be the case, but...”

“You’re also serious right punk? Then there’s no problems right?”

“Well yeah.”

Suimei did in fact agree with what the man was saying, however he was still unable to stop himself from sighing. It in fact turned out as he expected. In this kind of situation it was only to be expected that he would have to use force to get through it. Now it was only a matter of how exactly he should deal with the man—

(Well, it’s not like anyone like those fanatics from the Holy Inquisition would be around here. It’s a world where magic is used in the open after all. There’s no reason to completely conceal it...)

In the past few days, Suimei had frankly completely changed his mind on how exactly he should carry himself while in this world. At first he had thought that he should completely conceal his magic just as he had done in his own world — however the people of this world lived completely normal lives right alongside magic. If he was faced with magic, he could only defend and counteract with magic of his own. It wasn’t a situation where he could easily go about completely concealing his abilities at all times. Also, in this world the Holy Inquisition – a gathering of fanatics who believed only the miracles brought by their splendid God could be allowed in the world, the natural enemies of the ones known as magicians – did not exist in this world. The reasons for Suimei to conceal his ability to use magic were just disappearing one after the other. All that was left to worry about was having his techniques stolen by mind-reading spells and the like. However with the level of development that this world had reached in magic, they certainly did not have the knowledge to do such things.

Thus Suimei came to the conclusion that using magic to a certain extent would not pose any problems.

Naturally he felt that it would be better if he could resolve his current situation peacefully. However when he thought about it, this situation where he faced off against a guild member was the perfect chance to clear up all misunderstandings and break through the deadlock. As Suimei made his resolve, the man lowered his gaze at Suimei like he could not accept it at all.

“Punk, what are you just standing there stupefied for? Do you have no sense of danger?”

“That’s simply because I’m not in a dangerous situation.”

“Even before me?”

“Yeah.”

Suimei responded in a cool manner. To him this level of threat was absolutely nothing compared to his previous experiences. He had experienced true scenes of carnage, completely flooded in overpowering pressure and oppression. The man standing before him could not compare at all to the master swordsmen from his own world in terms of ability. Also compared to the fanatical hatred from the magician hunters who held absolute faith in their gods, the hostility he felt before him might as well have been a pleasant breeze. When he thought back to the times he was surrounded by large groups armed to the teeth with firearms or to the times he had faced off against the grotesque beings known as apparitions, the danger of his present situation might as well have not existed.

The man standing before him just couldn’t stand up to his previous experiences. Suimei could only admit that he had been exposed to an abnormal amount of ridiculous situations, but even so the pressure before him was truly nothing more than a relaxing breeze. Though just how did the man see him after seeing his calm composure? Was he looking at a brat’s provocation who knew nothing of the world? Or perhaps was he seeing a man who was hoping he would stop after putting on a brave front? As Suimei was used to concealing his identity, he always completely suppressed the mana leaking out of his body. This surely did not help in this situation.

“Fu... I’m starting. Show me you can stop or dodge this— “

The man spoke like teacher as he announced the beginning of the test. It seemed even with all his anger he truly did intend this as an actual test. Contrary to Suimei's expectations he was actually somewhat levelheaded. While briefly thinking of such frivolous thoughts, Suimei began focusing on the matter before him... The man was grabbing the sword on his back and intended to swing it down as he drew it. In that case the timing and trajectory would be simple. Suimei focused on the hilt of the man's sword and began optimizing his mana with the intent of concluding everything in an instant. As if he was simply brushing aside an insect in the air, Suimei snapped his fingers.

“Buugwhaaa!?”

And then a surprised sound filled the surroundings as the air gave off a light explosion... His scream did not contain a hint of cuteness. After the small air explosion, the man flew back into the air and onto the floor as if his body had been tremendously light. The sword which had been the focal point of the explosion had slipped out of his hands and flew out far behind him. After a short time, the sound of the sword hitting the ground filled the air along with the man's groans.

“Ugah! W-when... F-fuck! W-what just...?”

At the abrupt impact to his body, he seemed to have lost track of what had happened at all. He looked around and slowly grasped his situation.

“Fuu, eh...?”

From the receptionist standing right behind Suimei, he could hear an idiotic voice of bewilderment. Her surprise was quite the gap from the one who had just been yelling at him about bantering and making jokes. Anyways this was surely because she had no idea what had just happened. These was no way she would. It seemed the crowd shared her surprise as they all stared at him with round eyes... After a short while, the receptionist finally spoke.

“Umm, just what was that?”

“A magic spell.”

Suimei answered without a hint of bragging in his voice. As he had finally understood, the man held his head in pain and looked up at Suimei.

“Magic...? Without chanting or a keyword...”

“Yeah.”

“R-really...?”

“Well yeah, I didn’t do anything else after all.”

Suimei simply gave a frank reply as the man looked for confirmation once again. After seeing this reaction, Suimei came to the realization that Felmenia’s reaction was in fact normal in this world. It seemed that the ability to not only invoke magic without a chant, but to omit the keyword used as the activation sequence of magic itself was in fact something that was worthy of being shocked here...

Ceremonial magic. In some cases also called courtesy magic or ritual-like magic. It was one of the systems of magic. It was magic, however it held a completely different implication from other magic systems such as numerology and astrology. It was terminology used for the type of magic which was invoked simply by performing a predetermined action or by properly reciting a chant. In modern terms, it was also called manual magic. To react as if it was a predetermined law upon an action or chant applied to many magic. Summoning magic was the extreme example of this. The circular dances of Sufism, ninjutsu, Ying and Yang ceremonies and Buddhist seals all fell under this category. It was very likely that all the magic of this world were activated based on predetermined words as well and would all fall under this category.

This magic that Suimei had just used also completely fit into the category of ceremonial magic. It was an attack magic that he had performed the ceremony for before hand and tied to the action of snapping his fingers. Thus he was able to activate it at any time. It was plain, simple and well organized which made it easy to use. To use such a simple magic without requiring a keyword was completely normal to Suimei.

“Then, you are...”

“Yeah, that’s right. I apologize for explaining a little late, but I am in fact something like a mage...”

As Suimei apologized for his late introduction, the surrounding crowd broke

out into surprised murmurs.

“A mage with that kind of appearance...!”

“I’ve never heard of magic without a chant or keyword...”

“Oi, don’t tell me he’s actually some kind of amazing mage...?”

(Aah...)

He had gone too far. All he did was snap his fingers like always. In terms of magic, performing a spell with a simple action had been very popular so Suimei had never thought of it as amazing. There was also the fact that he had to choose an attack that would not excessively harm his opponent right on the spot so all of this simply couldn’t be helped. While ignoring the reaction of everyone around him, Suimei turned towards the receptionist while shrugging his shoulders.

“Do you not believe me?”

“N-no, it’s isn’t that I do not believe that you can use magic. But if you’re a mage why are you not wearing a robe or carrying a staff? Are they not indispensable items for a mage?”

“Huh? Are they really something mages have to carry around?”

“... No it’s not exactly like that, but looking at the trend among mages it does seem to be the case.”

“So it doesn’t matter right? It isn’t my hobby to carry myself around like those out-dated mages.”

“...”

Perhaps because of the way he had said it, the receptionist was now simply staring absentmindedly at him with her mouth open. And as if to reprimand him for saying something ridiculous, she finally snapped.

“I-it isn’t your hobby!? Aren’t they necessary to accurately control your mana and defend against magic!?”

“Certainly robes may generally serve that purpose, however a staff is not really necessary. It may be obvious to use one as an aid for performing an

extremely complex spell, but to simply accurately control your mana it should be obvious that one should be able to do that without any help. The ones who cannot do so are simply third-rate.”

“Uaaah...”

As Suimei gave out his harsh conclusion, the receptions let out a groan for some reason. Just how strongly did she hold to her belief that robes and staffs were absolute necessities to those who wielded magic in this world? Felmenia had also not used a staff so Suimei did not think it mattered all that much but it seemed that it had not been the case. Certainly in ancient times, the staff was an indispensable tool for magicians. According to history books this dated back to ancient Egypt where they wielded staffs carrying characteristics of the gods as a symbol of authority. In Celtic civilization the staffs used by the druids were also quite famous. In the modern age the one that comes up would be Mather’s Lotus Wand. The origin differed between all the different systems of magic, but magicians did compensate their strength using it as a magic tool.

It wasn’t as if Suimei hated such old-fashioned things. He also wasn’t making fun of the image passed down since ancient times. But it was still true that they had seemed inappropriate for modern magicians. In the first place magicians were the type to go against the flow to chase after mysteries. Even so they lived in a world driven forth by the advancement of science. It could be said that it was necessary for them to grasp new concepts. Magic staffs had been replaced by magic guns. Robes had given way to suits and jackets. It was true that history was important, but it was also important to think of creating a new image. That all being said, Suimei did in fact create a bit of an misunderstanding with the receptionist before him.

“Ah, my apologies. I truly did not realize that my appearance would be so important.”

Suimei had said this timidly while bowing his head, the man he had just fought answered in a slightly flustered manner.

“N-no, it’s fine. I also jumped to the wrong conclusion, sorry.”

“I truly appreciate that you say so... So I take it you no longer mind about my registration?”

“Yeah. If you’re a mage then I don’t got any complaints. I’ll leave the rest to her.”

Suimei walked up to the man and lent him a hand. He grabbed the hand to pull himself up and pointed his finger at the receptionist. Following his finger, Suimei spoke to the receptionist.

“So, how about it?”

“Y-yes. There are no problems with regards to your registration. I apologize for having been so impolite.”

“Aah, there’s no need to humble yourself so much... This time it was all my fault after all.”

The receptionist was bowed down while humbling herself because she had thought that she had failed by not properly being able to judge Suimei’s abilities. As Suimei tried to lighten the mood in a diligent manner, she simply apologized once more. With this the surrounding crowd all returned to what they were doing beforehand. The man he had just fought also gave him one more apology and returned to work without another word.

“... Umm, then I have a blank form for you here. Please fill in all the necessary items.”

As she said this she pulled out a piece of paper with fields for the minimum amount of personal information needed for registration. Suimei did not have any problems filling in any of this information. Using the nearby feather pen and inkwell he quickly finished filling in the form and handed it back to the receptionist. The receptionist inspected the form briefly before speaking once more.

“Suimei Yakagi-san... It may be impolite of me but it certainly is an unusual name.”

“Yeah, I get that a lot.”

Suimei returned her statement with a bitter smile. Even in Japan they would say the same thing to him as Suimei was an unconventional name to give a baby, in the end all he could do was laugh about it.

“So, Suimei-san, I’d like to confirm with you once more. Would it be correct to list your occupation as a mage?”

“Yes.”

“Incidentally, what attribute do you use?”

“... Umm, do i have to say it?”

“It is part of the regulations so please allow me to confirm it. Of course as it is personal information we would not make any of this public, alright?”

“U-uuun...”

“Is something the matter?”

The receptionist tilted her head to the side towards Suimei’s reluctance. For her, asking such a thing was completely reasonable. Now that he thought about it carefully, he recalled a conversation back in the castle while he was being told about magic by an excited Reiji and Mizuki who had just begun learning. They had said something ridiculous along the lines of the attributes a mage could use were determined at birth. Since he had heard such a story from two people who could use every attribute it seemed like completely nonsense... But setting that aside, the guild would need to grasp just what kind of magic their members were capable of, it was natural for them to ask. Suimei came up with an answer while still making a difficult face.

“My specialty... well it would be the fire attribute...”

“The fire attribute? But the magic you had used earlier wasn’t the fire attribute...”

“A-aah. I can also use magic with the wind attribute.”

“I see. Suimei-san holds two attributes right?”

“Y-yeah, well...”

Suimei was only able to return an ambiguous answer as the receptionist gave him a great smile. Just like he had said, Suimei was especially good at magic using the fire attribute. However that only meant he was slightly better at magic which used the fire attribute, unlike Reiji and Mizuki’s story he could also use many other kinds of magic.

His actual specialty was Kabbalah numerology — it took all of the world's matter and phenomena and interpreted them as enumerations of numbers and numerical formulas making it possible to peruse them as if they were in a book. By combining these numbers with magic he could manifest the idea held behind the numbers, be it fire, water, lightning or solidifying liquid. With the correct spell and the requisite amount of mana, it was possible to recreate any of the world's matter and phenomena as magic. It was a fact that the magicians of his world would generally never speak of the magic systems and attributes they were unable to use as to not expose their own weaknesses...

(Attributes huh...)

Ever since arriving in this world, he had a feeling that they had placed far too much importance on this aspect of magic. It was true that for magic the fundamental four elements, or the five elements as well as the wu xing (five elements of traditional Chinese philosophy: wood, fire, earth, metal, water) were important components for elementary theory. From there it was possible to come up with the correlation that the water attribute was strong against the fire attribute, however that in no way meant that because one could use the fire attribute that they were unable to use the water attribute.

Of course a natural affinity to certain types of magic existed, but fundamentally all humans had the potential to handle any attribute. There were individuals who had magics that they were not very good at, thus they would choose to simply not use certain attributes. It was similar to how many people were able to light a fire using a match but unable to do so using flint. In simple terms that person would be able to use the match, but was not very good at using the flint.

If one were to interpret the match and flint as different systems of magic, the act of creating fire could be accomplished in many ways. It could be done by borrowing the power of a devil or god or some other paranormal existence. Like Suimei does it could also be done by using enumeration of numbers to manifest the phenomenon itself. The results of using the stars or tarot cards for divination could result in fire appearing. It was also possible to create fire using runes or Ying and Yang techniques. It was a simple matter of techniques that people were good and bad at.

Thus if there was a magic technique one had an aptitude for, they would be able to manifest the corresponding attribute. There was no way there would be an attribute that was impossible for someone to use. To Suimei who had touched upon many different systems of magic as a modern magician, there were certain attributes which he found hard to handle. But that was the extent of his inabilities.

However there were also people who would only learn a single system of magic and would end up being unable to use certain attributes. If Suimei thought about it using this train of thought, then it would somewhat explain how this world treated attributes as something people could or could not use. It was very likely that the magic system used by Reiji and Felmenia was the major, if not only, magic system used by the people of this world, which would explain how this situation came about.

“By the way Suimei-san. Are you able to use recovery magic?”

“R-recovery magic?”

Suimei raised his voice at the sudden question. The receptionist once more made a confused expression and continued.

“Are you perhaps not aware of it?”

“No, I do know of it...”

He understood, but the nuance of the words recovery magic was just too vague to him. Back in his world the words healing magic and spiritual treatment were used, he could not help but feel a little uncomfortable with the general categorization of recovery magic. Suimei could guess that healing magic was an important ability, which would explain why the receptionist would ask such a thing. The ability to heal oneself as well as others at the scene of a battle was definitely an indispensable power. It goes without saying that even in his own world, throughout history, the number of magicians with a strong ability to perform healing magic were chronically insufficient.

“... Yeah, I can use it. It should be to the degree that it is second to none.”

“I understand.”

As Suimei nodded back to her, the receptionist finished filling out the form,

she cleared out her throat and began speaking in a business like manner.

“Ehem, excuse me. Well then, after this we will have Suimei-san evaluated and appointed a rank between F and S based on your ability. The explanation for how rank is evaluated will be given by the person in charge of such matters afterwards. Suimei-san, could you please go through that door and take a seat on one of the chairs within? We will be with you shortly so please wait a moment.”

As she said this she turned around and waved her hands towards the door behind her. Following her instructions, Suimei headed into the room beyond the door.



After being told about the upcoming evaluation from the receptionist, Suimei headed further into the guild and took a seat in a chair that was present in the passageway he had arrived in. The passageway was illuminated by what looked like lanterns hanging from the ceiling and gave off a slightly lonely feeling. It certainly reminded Suimei of another scene... a hospital waiting area in the middle of the night.

Despite being in another world, Suimei held onto these feelings triggered by the appearance of the passageway as he was sitting and waiting. Before long the door at the end of the passageway opened up and someone had appeared. It was a girl with soft and wavy light-brown hair. Similar to the receptionist, she was wearing the uniform for the guild staff members. As she arrived in front of Suimei, she cocked her head to the side and began speaking.

“— Ummm, Suimei Yakagi-san... right?”

“Yeah... Yes.”

As Suimei gave an obedient nod, the girl put on a brilliant smile.

“Excuse my behaviour. I am the one in charge of guiding the new guild members, my name is Dorothea. It’s a pleasure to meet you!”

“A-ah. I look forward to working with you.”

Suimei responded politely as he had with the previous receptionist towards

the energetic girl who saluted him. While holding onto his impression of just how different she was from the ones outside, Dorothea put on a candid smile and continued speaking.

“Ah, it’s fine if you speak normally. We’re similar in age too, let’s get along with a carefree attitude.”

“... Is it alright? That kind of thing?”

“It’s fine it’s fine. It’s easier for you to talk this way, it is also my job to lighten the tension from our brand new guild members who are about to take an evaluation you know? Well, from the looks of it, it may have been unnecessary for Suimei-san.”

“Y-yeah... Then, once again, it’s nice to meet you.”

“My pleasure!”

As Suimei responded as she wished, Dorothea replied full of energy. She then yelled “Then let’s go!” and began walking slowly down the passageway. Suimei followed after her. As if she suddenly remembered something, Dorothea turned around and asked Suimei a question.

“Umm, I had a look at your registration form. Suimei is a mage holding both fire and wind attributes right?”

“Yeah, well more or less.”

“Fufu, you’re awfully modest huh. Didn’t you just send Roha-san flying using magic without chanting let alone a keyword? Aren’t you actually a super skilled mage~?”

“Not at all. It all happened so suddenly that I lost myself in the situation and used it by accident.”

Suimei responded to Dorothea’s smile with a harmless smile of his own.

“... Well just like you saw, Roha-san is quite quick-tempered. Recently that kind of thing has been happening a lot and he would just fly into the mess. It couldn’t be helped, but we’ve done something inexcusable to Suimei-san. I’m sorry.”

“... Do people screw around and play pranks that often?”

“Yeah, they do. There are those who come up to the reception desk having only admired adventurers but without having a single fragment of ability and also those who are only looking for the benefits of being a guild member with malicious intent. It must have been an effect of Hero-sama appearing. For the past three days the number of these type of people multiplied quite significantly...”

It must have caused quite a lot of trouble to the guild members. Dorothea had mixed in a sigh as she talked about the situation. It was certainly true that the hero summoning which was performed because of the attack by the demons on Noshias would suddenly inspire the people who had been cowering in fear. Suimei was not sure how the people of this world commonly viewed the hero. However if it was anything like the blind devotion he witnessed in the castle, his existence would be directly linked to humanity’s victory. The hero’s existence in this case would certainly cause some people to go slightly crazy. It’s was a troublesome situation, however this would also be the major cause of the earlier matter at the reception desk.

“So are there many adventurer hopefuls gathered where we are headed?”

“No, Suimei-san would be the last one receiving his evaluation this morning. I’m sure almost none of them are still hanging around.”

“... I see.”

While Suimei was nodding, Dorothea changed the subject.

“By the way Suimei-san, did you see the figure of Hero-sama during the parade?”

“Well, pretty much, I got a small glimpse of him...”

Of course he didn’t mention that he had been seeing it every day... There was simply no reason for him to say this. Dorothea made an expression of admiration and continued.

“He was called Reiji-sama right? He carried such a marvellous atmosphere that I can’t even put it into words. As one would expect of one called a hero. I hear the heroes from previous summonings were also similar to him in that they were the very embodiment of earnestness and righteousness.”

Dorothea came to a casual stop and closed her eyes, she was probably remembering the parade. It seemed she also found hope from the image of the hero burned into her mind. Suimei who did not spend his everyday life alongside them did not quite know if the hero was a symbol of hope for sure, however it did seem to be the case for this girl. It was probable that the general opinion of the people matched hers, so Suimei decided to ask.

“Does Dorothea think that the hero will defeat the Demon Lord and the demon army?”

“If Hero-sama’s extraordinary powers described from hearsay are true, I do think it is possible.”

“Hearsay?”

“Does Suimei-san not know of them?”

“It’s a bit embarrassing, but not very well.”

Suimei was not actually ashamed of it, but he would at least act that way superficially. The ones talking about the hero would likely be the general populace. Much like Dorothea was making that kind of expression, there was sure to be many people who did the same while telling stories and fairy-tales about the hero from another world. Dorothea had mumbled ‘... that’s unexpected,’ to herself before telling Suimei about it.

“Regarding Hero-sama’s power, there are only the descriptions from history books, stories and oral tradition passed down through the ages. In the few times that the world had fallen into a crisis, Hero-sama would be summoned to our world. The fights that Hero-sama took part in at those times were terrifying. There was the one who fought a giant who was so tall that he could reach the heavens and split it clear in two with a single sword strike. Or the one who cornered the tyrant gripped by insanity by flying through the sky on the back of a black beast. Or the one who struck down a Demon Lord with a holy sword. Just from what was passed down to us, there are all sorts of stories.”

“Heeh.”

The things she was talking about were quite interesting. Not only was the contents of her stories interesting, they were also matters that deeply involved

Reiji and company. There's no way that Suimei wouldn't be interested. He would have to investigate further into this another time.

"What does Suimei-san think?"

"Hm?"

"Regarding Hero-sama defeating the Demon Lord. Does Suimei-san believe he can accomplish it?"

"... I wonder. If the current hero truly possesses the power that Dorothea had just told me of, then it may just be possible. Though I wonder if it is truly like that."

"Oh, you think he can't?"

"No, I think it is too naive to think that just the presence of the hero will change the situation between defeat and victory. I also think there's something strange about deciding that victory is impossible in the first place..."

As expected, as Suimei was aware of the circumstances he was filled with anxiousness. A battle was not such an easy going thing that it could be won simply because one had received a strong power. Suimei closed his eyes as he worried about these things as Dorothea puffed up her cheeks and spoke.

"It would be better not to say such things outside. Hero-sama is on the same level as Alshuna-sama's envoy. If the people from the Salvation Church heard you, you would be in for a long sermon about all kinds of things."

"Haha... I'll be careful."

She had brought up a sermon. Lefille had also said something similar, it seemed that for the people of this world, a sermon from the Salvation Church was dreadful enough to use as a threat. From now on it would be a good idea for Suimei to keep these thoughts in the corner of his mind. Dorothea then completely turned her expression around from when she was giving Suimei a stern warning.

"Well, it certainly is as Suimei-san says. The people from the guild are not so optimistic either... Well returning to our previous talk, because of that influential figure, the number of applicants spurred on by fanaticism who

applied to the knights, regular army and our Twilight Pavilion had all multiplied quite extraordinarily in the last few days compared to before...”

“So that would explain why the receptionist had gotten all tense and tried to turn me away when I came in dressed like a completely normal person.”

“Yeah. Suimei-san, I think you should at least acquire a staff. I don’t how it will be after you receive a guild card, but a hopeful new applicant who did not even carry a weapon asking to register at the counter was unprecedented.”

“It’s as you say, I’m reflecting.”

Suimei was truly embarrassed that he did not think things through thoroughly enough. It was completely like a country bumpkin who could not see anything around him. While Suimei was lamenting at his mistake in his mind and bowing to her weakly, Dorothea thrust out her chest.

“It’s good as long as you understand. In other word it’s all good.”

Dorothea had exclaimed this with complete satisfaction.

“So Suimei-san. Do you have any other questions.”

“Then one more. What exactly will I be doing for an evaluation?”

This was the thing Suimei had on his mind all this time. In the novels Mizuki had shown him, at the time of the guild registration, the visitor from the other world would place their hand on a mysterious crystal ball and it would measure their magic ability. However would that really be the case here as well? As Suimei was wondering about this, Dorothea was making an expression like she was waiting for Suimei to ask all along, and answered vigorously.

“Naturally, it’s a fight!”

Just what was natural about that...



Shortly after Suimei heard about the method of evaluation from Dorothea, they passed through another doorway into a large room which resembled the interior of a gymnasium.

“I see, the reason the building takes up so much space is because of this

facility.”

“Yes. This is the largest guild office in the country after all. We’ll at least have a proper place for training.”

“A training ground huh... Even so there doesn’t appear to be any people here?”

As Suimei had stated the spacious training grounds was completely devoid of people. He had heard that the number of applicants had increased drastically and thought there would be some present here, however the only human presence he could sense was in a room further into the building.

“The second training ground is used for evaluations in the morning, so there won’t be anyone training at this time. I believe the person who was evaluated before Suimei-san is in the room further inside filling out the required documentation.”

“I see.”

Suimei gave off an indifferent reply and felt that something below his feet was out of place. He lowered his gaze and decided to ask Dorothea about it.

“Hey, the materials used here, aren’t they a little weird?”

“Yes, I’m surprised you noticed. This training ground was built using advanced magic resistant materials. Magic is shot around this place quite a lot after all, so it was designed not to break from it.”

“A magic resistant material?”

“Yes. It was a very recent discovery. Within all of Metel this is about the only place using it. Ehen~”

“Heeh. To this such a think existed...”

Suimei was completely ignoring Dorothea who was acting excessively proud while admiring the material. Though he was ignoring her, he was gazing at the floor with deep interest. The materials that made up the wall and floors looked like a simple construction of wood and stone. But to think it was actually a material resistant to magic. In the other world it was possible to produce a similar material after spending time to treat the material with magic so it wasn’t

that uncommon. However for a material to naturally possess resistance to magic without the aid of a spell grasped his interest deeply. While Suimei was gazing at all the surrounding walls, Dorothea once more welcomed him to the training ground and spread out her arms.

“I had said this once already, but this will be the place where we hold your evaluation. We will pair Suimei-san up with a guild member of our choosing and hold a match right here. After observing the way you fight, we will assign you an appropriate rank.”

“Hey... Theoretically, just theoretically, is there an evaluation method that does not involve fighting?”

“That’s a difficult question. In return I’ll ask you, is there a simple way other than fighting to evaluate you?”

“No, I got it. That’s certainly how it is...”

“So you understand right? Then—”

While Dorothea was trying to move the conversation forwards, a presence on the other side of the door further into the room had started to move towards them. Alongside the sound of the door opening, a single shadow appeared. After spotting Suimei and Dorothea, the person in question called out to them. The sound of their voice was like the ringing of a clear bell, a pleasant voice carried over to them on a gentle wind.

“Could that be... Isn’t it Suimei-kun?”

“Aah, Grakis-san. It’s been a short while.”

The person coming from the door was the one Suimei had made an acquaintance with earlier due to peculiar reasons, Lefille Grakis. Suimei gave out a weird reply to her as she walked over with her vivid, shiny, long red hair swinging around behind her. After closing the distance between them she put on a puzzled expression and began talking.

“Why are you here?”

“Right, it seems I’ll be taking an evaluation to determine my rank.”

“Mu...? But, weren’t you here at the guild to put in a request?”

“Ah...”

Suimei finally came to an understanding from Lefille’s surprised expression. When they parted from each other before the reception desk, she had said ‘I hope that your commission gets quickly resolved,’ and now he finally figured out what her misunderstanding was.

“No, in fact I’m also a registration candidate. Ah, by the way, even though I look like this I’m a mage.”

“So that’s how it was. I hadn’t seen you carrying any weapon and was sure you were here to make a request...”

“... Sorry, really. Really sorry. I’ll be careful from now on.”

“Why are you apologizing so much?”

“... No, don’t worry about it.”

Naturally the conversation had moved towards this topic. To get one’s just desserts is something that is often said. After hearing similar things repeated to him since his mistake, Suimei was just sinking further into his mind. Seeing that the two of them had recognized each other, Dorothea began to speak.

“Do the two of you know each other?”

“Not really, we had just met in front of the reception desk earlier.”

Dorothea gave an understanding nod to Lefille. Suimei then jumped back into the conversation.

“Grakis-san, what about your evaluation?”

“Yeah, it had just finished a moment ago.”

“How was it?”

“Umu, about adequate I would say.”

She had replied with closed eyes and a daring smile. Which means that it wasn’t her evaluation that was adequate, it was more likely that she got by with an adequate margin. She didn’t give of a single hint that she was tired or breathing raggedly. Seeing this, Dorothea gave off an expression halfway between astonishment and bewilderment.

“To say about adequate with those two as your opponents... They’re both quite skilled among all of our members you know?”

“Is that right? I just moved around as usual though?”

“Just as usual huh. It’s a real shame that Lefille-san won’t be staying in Metel.”

Hearing these words from Dorothea, Suimei casually turned towards Lefille.

“...? Where is Grakis-san headed?”

“Aah, that’s—”

“Ummmmm, I’m sorry to interrupt your conversation but~ it’s about time to start your evaluation, is that alright?”

It seemed that Dorothea was pressed for time as she cut off Lefille in the middle of her reply. They had spent quite a lot of time talking since Suimei and Dorothea met after all.

“Yeah. I’m ready at any time.”

“Understood. Then... Rikus-san and Enmarph-san! If you will!”

Dorothea raised her voice towards the room further into training ground. Responding to her call, two people walked through the doorway. One was a man carrying a two-handed sword while wearing leather armour who appeared to be a warrior. The other was a man carrying a staff in one hand and wearing robes, a mage. These were surely the opponents that Dorothea had been talking about for the evaluation.

“There’s two of them?”

“Yes. From here we will have Suimei-san have a match with one of these two. Rikus-san is a warrior and Enmarph-san is a mage. They’re both completely different types, however they are also both quite skilled and should serve well in measuring your abilities.”

“Hmmm...”

While Dorothea was explaining, Suimei had been scrutinizing the people who were still approaching from a fair distance. Mana, presence, prowess. He could

not sense anything from either of them that would put him on guard. After a short time, they finally arrived before Suimei, and immediately the warrior-like man started speaking to Suimei with words filled with irritation.

“So you the newbie?”

“Yeah.”

“Name and occupation?”

“My name is Suimei Yakagi. I’m pretty much a mage.”

Towards the excessively high-handed attitude directed towards him, Suimei ended up replying in a very blunt manner. To this brief response, the warrior-like man, who Suimei assumed was Rikus, gazed at Suimei in frustration.

“Ah? What’s with the pretty much?”

“It’s just a matter of my personal feelings. There’s no reason to pay that much attention to it.”

“Ha... I see.”

For some reason the man named Rikus was being awfully haughty towards Suimei. He was probably irritated and in ill humour about Suimei talking back to him, but still he was being a bit too blunt. The mage called Enmarph, though silent, was also giving off an atmosphere like one would be electrocuted from just touching him. And then for some reason, Rikus turned towards Lefille.

“... You, you’re still here?”

“Yeah. I was just talking to these two a bit.”

Upon hearing this, Rikus’ brow had twitched. For a while now, Rikus had been making a scary face reminiscent of the Nioh (two angry, muscular guardian statues found at Buddhist temples), and after his short facial twitch stopped, he returned his glare towards Suimei.

“You, are you an acquaintance of that woman?”

“Eh? Well more or less...”

Before Suimei could explain that he had just met her in passing just this day, Rikus suddenly let out a strange, turbulent atmosphere and began muttering.

“... I see. An acquaintance huh. Is that so...”

“Um...”

“You’re acquaintances, right?”

A strange atmosphere and smile were turned towards Suimei. When he looked to the side he also noticed Enmarph letting out the same impression. Suimei seemed to have realized just what was going on from the earlier conversation, and turned to Lefille.

“... Could it be, the opponents that Grakis-san defeated...”

“Yeah, just as you guessed, it was those two... It’s a bit strange to apologize here, but sorry.”

“As expected...”

It was completely as Suimei expected, but for some reason he could only sigh.



So just why hadn’t anything changed since his time at the reception desk? The number of people around and the cause were different, however Suimei had only been facing undeserving hate all day. Facing the outburst of anger and hostility from the two guild members, Suimei let out a long sigh. First the prime minister, then the reception desk and then here, today was an unlucky day where he was just being repeatedly exposed to hateful gazes.

From the previous conversation, as he expected, the opponents that Lefille defeated during her evaluation were the two guild members standing before him. For the evaluation, normally an adventurer from the Twilight Pavilion would have a fight while offering their guidance. It was supposed to be a humbling experience. This was also normally only a single person. However for her own self indulgence she had asked to fight both of them one after the other.

Of course, the result was obvious. Suimei glanced to his side. Setting aside the thin blade and light armour, the young woman gave off a sense of a noble upbringing and an extravagant lifestyle. Seeing the two of them who were cursing at her, it seemed that even still she had beaten them with a lot of room

to spare. Seeing as the exchange of information had ended, Suimei turned towards the two guild members.

“... So now I just have to do it as well right?”

Suimei had no reason to pay attention to feel down about the unreasonable hate and hostility being pointed at him. Faced with Suimei’s arrogant attitude as he asked this, Rikus replied.

“That’s right.”

“The format of the match?”

“It’s a guild match. There’s no need to adhere to any formalities. We fight, then we’ll give you our evaluation. Just that.”

“By fight, you mean as a normal bout right?”

“Yeah. However, in the guild evaluation match we use training swords. Since you’re a mage... Aah, I heard you don’t use a staff anyways right? Fu— if you have a weapon on hand that you want to use feel free to use it. Just, regardless of whether it is by magic or other means, you’re not allowed to cause major injuries or kill anyone. Well, with us as your opponents that will be impossible. Right, Enmarph?”

“... No problem.”

This was the first time Enmarph had spoken. He seemed to be a quiet person. However even though his face was seething with anger, his voice did not waver in the least.

“But, didn’t you just lose~? Both of you too~”

“Shut up Dorothea! Don’t fucking make fun of us!”

“Heeeee!”

Dorothea let out a scream when faced with Rikus’ thunderous yell and Enmarph’s silent pressure. She then turned towards Suimei and stuck out her tongue, she really did not need to add more oil to this fire...

“So, which will it be? We’ll let you pick.”

“Which huh...”

There was no reason for Suimei to really think about it too hard. It wasn't like he was hiding his magic like he had when he just arrived in this world. He had seen fights between Reiji and the knights at the castle, but watching and participating were two different things. It would make sense to get some experience fighting in this world while he had the chance. Lefille was about to leave anyways, so it would only be the three of them left in the room. In that case Suimei could bring everything to an end without a fuss. If he handled this correctly, it was also possible to have the opinion of him from the reception desk become much more hazy.

(In that case, this is a great chance.)

In the end Suimei was about to pour even more oil into the fire without having needed Dorothea's assistance... Suimei finally spoke towards Rikus who had been glaring at him all this time just waiting for an answer.

"Well then, it is a little presumptuous of me... I'll take both of you at the same time."

"... Hoo?"

"Eeh!?"

At this statement, Lefille let out a voice like she was very interested while Dorothea let out a surprised yell. On the other hand, the two he had said this two were obviously quite stirred.

"... Ah? You want to take both of us on at the same time? Are you seriously saying that punk?"

"Yeah. I'm not in the habit of making bad jokes."

Suimei gave out a shameless reply, this only lead to Rikus' mood worsening more than it already had.

"If you had the ability of that woman there it'd be one thing, but do you really think we would fall behind a single mage? Don't get so damn cocky just cause you sent one guy flying at the reception desk."

At the same time as Rikus' was putting all of his anger into words, Enmarph had also been silently boiling over to the side while glaring at Suimei. As

expected, they were quite prideful. Though it couldn't be helped. Suimei could still be categorized as a child and he was boasting before them. There's no way they could keep calm at such a thing. However the feeling in this case was mutual as Suimei was getting tired of being yelled at. At the increasing tension the air, Dorothea cut in timidly to try and calm down the situation.

"... Um, Suimei-san. Are you serious about fighting both of them at the same time?"

"Yeah. That's what I would like. After this I need to go find a place to stay for the evening and a place to eat, I'd like to end this quickly."

"Um, that's not what I meant— "

Before Dorothea could finish, Rikus cut in with an irritated voice.

"Are you confident that you can finish this quickly?"

"Yeah."

"You sure talk big."

"It's only about this much. Just as you both have your pride as guild members, I have pride in the path that I've taken up to this point. It isn't good for your health to be humble all the time after all."

"... Brat. An idiot who can't judge their opponents' abilities will only have their rank mercilessly dropped. If you take back your joke now and pick just one of us, I'll forgive you just this once."

"I have no intention to. Also I haven't done anything that requires your forgiveness."

"... Don't regret it you hear?"

"Thanks for the warning."

As Suimei shrugged his shoulders, Rikus began grinding his teeth and turned towards Enmarph.

"Tch... Enmarph. We can't let ourselves be underestimated by the brats any more. Let's quickly beat the crap out of him."

"... I know."

After confirming with Enmarph, Rikus returned his glare towards Suimei as if he was trying to stare a hole right through his head. While the air was still prickling with tension, the two of them headed to the centre of the training grounds.

“... Suimei-kun. Those two are quite skilled fighters you know? Is it really alright?”

“Yeah.”

“You have confidence you can beat them?”

“Though I’m afraid my looks don’t give off that kind of impression.”

As Suimei gave out this self-deprecating statement, Lefille let out a gentle laugh.

“That’s true.”

“... An immediate statement. So mean.”

As Lefille responded so quickly, Suimei had unintentionally let out a joking retort. The two of them both began laughing.

“Fufufu...”

“Hahahaha.”

She was someone who Suimei unexpectedly got along with quite well. As he was casually thinking about how Alshuna’s unfortunate guidance had brought them together...

“... Anyways, facing the two of them at the same time lines up with my goals. I’m fine with it.”

“... I see. In that case I don’t have anything more to say.”

Lefille nodded quietly, and for some reason turned towards Dorothea.

“Excuse me, would you allow me to observe this fight?”

“Ehh?”

Suimei had let out a weird noise unconsciously. Just why would just ask to observe? This development was going completely against Suimei’s plans.

“Yes, I don’t mind... but perhaps Suimei-san doesn’t want you to?”

“Eh... No, well I don’t particularly mind.”

“Then why did you make that kind of noise? Your face was twisted all like gu~nya you know? Gu~nya.”

“No no, I just didn’t expect it. I was just surprised.”

“Is that so? Even so your behaviour was weird...”

Dorothea cocked her head to the side as Lefille gave a satisfied nod as she had received their consent.

“Then it’s fine. I will be intently watching your fight.”

It seemed Lefille was completely intent on staying. Surely her interest as a swordswoman had been piqued by his claim to fight against both of them. He was going to be seen, however his plan would not change. While mumbling ‘well, whatever,’ to himself in his mind, Suimei headed to the centre of the training ground.

“Well then, are you ready?”

As Dorothea asked, Rikus pulled his sword silently from its sheathe and Enmarph took his stance as he pointed the jewel on his staff towards Suimei. Following after the two of them, Suimei took out his black gloves – the glove of discord – and put them on. He then removed his vial of mercury from his pocket. Rikus had no idea what it was and asked in curiosity.

“What’s that?”

“No, I’m just getting my weapon out.”

“Ah?”

Surrounded by curious gazes from all sides, Suimei popped the lid off the vial and began pouring the contents on the ground, the indispensable materials needed for his alchemy. It seemed that this was a fairly unusual substance in this world. Lefille knit her brows towards the strange silver brilliance.

“Silver... water?”

“It’s mercury. Have you never seen it?”

“Yeah, this is my first time.”

Lefille squinted a bit and spoke once more.

“So, is it some kind of drug?”

“Nope—”

While Lefille was questioning Suimei, every last drop of mercury had emptied from the vial onto the floor. As the last of the liquid made a splash on the ground, Suimei concentrated his mana and began his spell.

“—Permutatio Coagulatio vis Lamina.” (Transform, Solidify, Achieve Power)

A magic circle formed and began expanding on the ground at the centre of the spilled mercury. The circle was emitting a dark red light of mana. As Suimei was manipulating his magic, he could see four people, and four surprised faces. It was probable they were surprised that a magic circle had formed without having to be drawn just as Felmenia had.

“Alchemy...”

Suimei heard the voice of the mage, Enmarph. It seems he was at least able to recognize this much. As if urged on by the circle below it, the mercury stretched out like clay and rose, spread out and moved into Suimei’s hand in the shape of a sword.

“—This is my weapon.”

Suimei finished his answer to Lefille’s question. He now faced his opponents and concentrated entirely on them. He was wearing neither his coat or suit, but a fight was a fight. As he set aside the conversation, Suimei gripped the mercury katana in his hands and took his stance. Before him he saw Rikus looking at him with suspicious eyes.

“... Oi you. Didn’t you say you were a mage?”

“What I just did was magic was it not?”

“A mage using a sword... Rather, can you even use that?”

A familiar question. Felmenia had said the same thing. It seems to the people of this world the popular opinion was that a mage and a warrior were two

distinct existences. Mages were the rear guard, warriors were the vanguard. They were stuck on this stereotype. He who was different from their image of both mages and warriors was obviously surprising in a way.

“Well, reasonably well, right?”

“Is that so—”

As Suimei grinned back towards Rikus, there was no longer any more questions to ask. As Rikus spat out those annoyed words, Dorothea took it as an opportunity to signal the beginning of the match and raised her hand.

“Well then... Begin!”

The very moment Dorothea yelled, Rikus lunged towards Suimei. A very simple to understand first move. Starting with a strong step, it was a splendid diagonal slash. Suimei returned the slash with one of his own.

“HA—”

Rikus snorted out a laugh. Anybody who was watching this scene would determine that Suimei’s decision was poor. It was obvious when comparing their physiques. It could be easily seen just from the size of their arms. He would be overpowered and pushed back. Thus Rikus was unable to stop his laughter from reaching his face, however the results completely betrayed his expectations. In the brief moment where Rikus and Suimei’s swords clashed, Suimei suddenly dove forwards to the left. He pressed his arm against his body as his sword was pushed behind him and then raised it over his head. He was now standing behind Rikus to his right with the sword fully brandished above him.

“What!?”

Rikus’ posture was broken as he had just gone from a contest of strength to suddenly having his back taken. As he yelled out over-enthusiastically and attacked, he threw all of his weight into his sword, but was now falling pitch forwards. This was Suimei’s technique which met a diagonal slash with his own and warded their strike off while breaking their stance. As his technique finished, Suimei immediately turned around, he had no intention of standing around like an idiot and waiting. As he turned, before him was the completely

defenceless back of Rikus. Normally this would be where Suimei cut him down while making a speech about having to pay the price of having his back taken, however there was no opportunity to do so. This was because behind Suimei, there was still a tiger's jaws aimed towards him.

“—Oh Wind. Thou shall are the power of eternity who crushes all, bestow the enemy before me with your rage! Wind Fist!”

“Secandum Excipio!” (Number 2 Rampart, Local Deployment!)

Holding no regrets to the strike that he was no longer able to take before him, with the air coiled up into the form of a tyrannical fist flying towards him, Suimei put up his defensive magic. The magic he used was the brilliant golden fortress' number 2 rampart. A shield against magic spells.

“Wha!?”

Suimei did not know just whose surprised voice this was. He had his sword pointed towards Rikus, and opening his stance, raised his left hand out towards Enmarph behind him. With his hand as its origin, the golden magic circle immediately deployed itself in front of him. The compressed air fist smashed into his shield and scattered into the surroundings as whirlwinds. The magic circle did not even creak as time had passed for a few seconds before everyone had collected themselves. With a warped face due to his failure which had created such a disgraceful opening, Rikus reformed his stance and faced Suimei.



“Tch, using such a weird sword style.”

“I was taught by a nearby dojo.”

Suimei let these words out with complete composure.

“What!? What was that magic!?”

Enmarph had suddenly gotten lively and began making an uproar. Suimei faced his surprised face while narrowing his eyes and made a statement with a doubtful voice.

“... It’s defensive magic?”

“I’m not asking about that! Just now you—”

“What? Did I do something strange?”

Enmarph was completely dumbfounded. Because of his surprise he wasn’t

able to put any words together. The golden fortress was defensive magic. It was a magic Suimei had created to protect himself against all types of attacks. It was a solid circle that he would even call his masterpiece. No matter how you looked at it, it was defensive magic. The only other thing to be surprised about would be the magic circle. However he had also just shown the technique to form a magic circle from nothing when he manipulated the mercury. There was nothing new to yell about.

“Strange you say, everything—”

As Enmarph was too stimulated to form any coherent thoughts, Dorothea spoke in his stead.

“But Suimei-san! That magic you used just now activated without the mediation of any attribute!?”

“... That’s because it doesn’t use an attribute. Isn’t it quite frankly useless to apply an attribute onto defensive magic?”

Attributes were simply dead weight when it came to defensive magic. Fundamentally, to defend against an opponent’s magic one would defend against the spell itself, or defend against the cause of the magic itself. It was true that applying an attribute would increase its defensive power against magic of the opposing attribute, however the weakness of doing so was that it was possible to have the defence completely bypassed in that case. Because there was such a large demerit, it had been decided that applying attributes to defensive magic was unnecessary. However Enmarph did not seem convinced at all.

“Ridiculous! There’s no way it is useless! To begin with magic is something that takes shape only after mediation of an attribute! Magic that can be invoked with the mediation of an attribute is just...”

“Ha-Haa? Mediation of an, attribute?”

No matter what nonsense Enmarph was about to spout, Suimei was having difficulty grasping the meaning behind his words. Without the mediation of an attribute magic will not activate, just what did he mean by those words? Attributes were an indicator used to classify magic into categorical types. It was not some kind of essential power or component used to invoke magic. It wasn’t,

but—

“... Suimei-kun. All the magic in the world manifests because of power borrowed from the elements. Without using the power of the elements, magic would be impossible to use. That’s how it is supposed to be, but why are you able to use magic while ignoring this principle?”

What Lefille had just said with a scrutinizing scowl and an attentive voice was the focus of the mystery that had been bothering Suimei. And now, he finally understood.

“—Aah. Aah, aah, aah! Ha, I got it. I see, I finally understand... The magic here is not bestowed with a chemical element, the chemical element itself is used as an intermediary for invocation, without it they can’t do anything.”

Suddenly, the problem that had been bothering Suimei ever since he arrived in this world had become perfectly clear. At first, Suimei had thought that the magic of this world was nature magic, just like the one he could find anywhere in his world. Nature magic used the power of nature to bring forth magic, or it used magic to bring forth natural phenomena. Setting that aside, after observing the magic from this world, Suimei had thought it strongly resembled nature magic and misunderstood. However now that he opened the lid, it was like a counterfeit of nature magic.

Suimei recalled the first magic he saw in the castle, the magic used to open the door. If he was using nature magic to open the door, it was still strange, the power to simply push or pull existed within nature magic after all. He could have just used that to do the deed. Adding a light breeze to push into the door was the height of futility after all. However, this only applied if the magic of this world was nature magic. In other words, since he was unable to do so, the magic in this world was only outwardly similar to nature magic. The elements that they referred to here were not chemical elements, they were restricted to the eight elements that they must make use of to be able to manifest magic. This was why any magic they invoked always carried a prominent attribute with it.

“Everyone of them kept saying the things they called elements were absolutely necessary, it made everything hard to understand. It only

meaninglessly adds to the magic's complexity and adds a corresponding amount of time to perform. It's simply bothersome and idiotic."

"Wh-what the hell are you saying...?"

"What, it's nothing important. To use an attribute to defend is just something difficult, that's all."

It was possible to this world's magic, the flow of mana – spell – defence simply did not exist. Instead they did mana – spell – elements – defence and could not deviate from that flow. This was why the chants here were so long, and why they were always surprised when the chant was omitted.

(My goodness, to think it was like this...)

It had also been the case with Felmenia, but Suimei had still not actually studied the magic of this world. In Suimei's world, grimoires or books known as esoteric writings, were something not aimed towards beginners in magic. Just by reading one, one would not simple become able to use magic like some sort of manual or instruction booklet. Even to just read one properly required a fair amount of time and materials.

That was why Suimei did not attempt to study any magic. Since it would take such a long time to decipher, Suimei decided it would be more beneficial to study about the world, it's nature, their legends and about the origin of their magic instead. This was why he only read these kinds of books whenever he holed up in the archives. A part of Suimei also just wanted to purely enjoy and discover magic in the middle of a fight. He was anticipating mysteries that he still knew nothing about to move and excite him... on that day, there was nothing of the sort though.

"... Well whatever, let's continue. We're both surprised all the same. That makes us even. So you don't mind right?"

As Suimei prodded him with these words, Enmarph began chanting in anger.

"—Oh Wind! Thou art the power of eternity, become a circle. Such is a circle of tyranny. The uncountable destruction born from the air, rush towards my enemy with your righteousness. Noise Tyrant!"

Enmarph's keyword resounded through the air – a turbulent tyrant. With

Enmarph as its centre, a vortex of air rose up into the air in an instant, following that, as if all the air in the room was shaking, many whirlwinds began forming in his surroundings. Unlike the single fist he had shot out before, this was a barrage of air. Using the power of numbers he intended to arrogantly overwhelm Suimei's shield. However...

“Secandum Perfectus!” (Number 2 Rampart, Reinforce Deployment!)

Defensive magic. The golden magic circle began to shine much brighter than before as the storm of tyranny rushed towards it with violent turbulence. Individually each strike carried more power than his previous attack, and here there was ten or twenty, no, more than that. It was a rapid fire continuous bombardment. However as each one struck the golden rampart, they would vanish in an instant. This only repeated continuously. Not an atom of his attack was able to reach Suimei. After a while the wind magic came to its end leaving dust from the floor flying across the entire room. As Suimei returned a cold gaze to Enmarph implying it had been boring, Enmarph was not only no longer able to speak, he could no longer even move his hands as he froze in his pose with his staff pointed towards Suimei. At that moment, Suimei heard the sound of someone kicking off of the ground fiercely. It was Rikus.

“Don't get...”

Cocky is what he surely was going to say. He had his sword ready in both hand and was leaping towards Suimei. It was an attack aimed at the exact moment that Enmarph's magic ended. Even so it was far too slow for Suimei to be unable to react. Suimei moved his arm pointed towards Enmarph over towards Rikus, and invoked his magic.

“Primum Excipio!!” (Number 1 Rampart, Local Deployment!!)

“—cocky dammit!!”

As they yelled the sword and rampart collided making a noise like metal gears violently grinding together as if to split the inner ear. Rikus' sword and Suimei's shield deployed in full anticipation of his actions. But it was completely meaningless for the sword to strike a castle rampart, this applied here as well. The magic circle did not weaken at all, but the sword had been slowly shaving away from the collision.

“You won’t reach me with only that much.”

“Uu, guu...”

He was simply standing there glaring at his opponent over the attack, a truly ridiculous sight. Seeing Rikus’ anguish as a perfect opportunity, at the moment Rikus slackened the strength in his sword, Suimei stepped to the left and took a composed stride to the side of Rikus whose strike had now completely missed its target. As he shifted to a positions to Rikus’ side, Suimei snapped his fingers strongly with the intent of defeating him.

“GUAAAAAAH!”

At the outbreak of the sudden powerful attack to his side, Rikus was sent flying away. Without confirming how far he went, Suimei rearranged his stance and faced Enmarph. Enmarph was still gripping his staff pointed at Suimei, and as he was about to start chanting...

“Is it really okay? Your magic won’t work.”

“GU! Even so—”

He’ll do it. A magic battle. Suimei praised Enmarph’s spirit. While Enmarph began chanting with zeal with the intent of striking down Suimei, Suimei also began his own spell.

“Buddhi Brahma. Buddhi Vidya.” (Awaken Power. Along with Great Knowledge)

“—Oh Wind. Thou art the power of eternity, blow fiercely.”

Contemporary magic and this world’s magic. They were prepared in different way, but victory would surely be influenced by the speed of chanting. However before a magician who used the compressed chants of the Kabbalah, the magic which required time to mediate with an attribute was simply the height of stupidity. If one were to compare their speeds, it would be obvious that the mage from the other world would lose... However that only applied if the spells were of the same strength.

“Gale!”

The first to finish and invoke their keyword was not Suimei, but Enmarph.

Surprisingly he used a chant which only required two or three verses. However the spell was not strong enough, there was no way that it would harm Suimei. In that case, just why was he using it with this kind of timing? The answer to that question became apparent immediately. The mana which built up into a gale, was blowing in from behind Suimei.

(You can do it after all—)

While paying attention to the cold premonition behind him, Suimei broke out a warped smile. Enmarph had not been looking for a head on magic battle, it was a tactic. He risked his life by leaving himself completely defenceless to attack Suimei from a blind spot. Suimei wanted to give him some words of admiration. Thus he finished his chant.

“Buddhi Karanda Trishna!” (Thus, Surrender Yourself to the Sweet Voice’s Thirst!)

Trishna, meaning thirst, it was a word used ceremoniously in over five religions. Thus it was simple to use for magic and a very powerful Sanskrit. When used in Suimei’s magic, it carried the mysteries of Esoteric Buddhist systems. A magic circle formed below Enmarph’s feet with a completely different structure than any circle he had seen before, a magic circle which embodied thirst manifest.

“Not yet!!”

Along with his bursting fighting spirit, mana began to flood out of Enmarph’s body. He intended to resist the spell by forcefully overpowering it with mana. This was the final measure taken to defend against magic when pushed into a corner. In general, before unknown magic, it was not a bad choice. Unfortunately for Enmarph, the magic used by Suimei was Kalavinka’s sweet voice. This was not a direct attack, this magic was designed to suck all the mana out of its target. In other words...

“Wha—GAAAAAAAAAAH!!”

Accompanied by his scream, mana was now being released from Enmarph’s body at an accelerated rate completely out of his control. Before long, having all his power drained from his body, the mage fell to his knees.

“OoOOOOOOOH!!”

Next, Suimei heard a war cry from Rikus burst out from behind him. He had been splendidly blown away earlier but seeing that he closed the distance so quickly, his actions were surely meant to cover for Enmarph. However Suimei did not lose his composure. He spun around and flung his mercury katana into his other hand, as he twisted and kicked up dirt like a whirlwind and turned over to strike in an instant. Compared to the heavy sword being held in both of Rikus’ hands, the blade Suimei swung had been a moment faster—

“Gu, uu...”

Stopping his sword right at Rikus’ neck, Suimei declared his victory.

“—With his, I believe it is my victory, right?”

There was not a single complaint in response to his question.



As Suimei slowly withdrew his mercury katana from Rikus’ neck, Rikus fell to the ground and let out a rough breath. Behind Suimei, Enmarph was also sitting on the ground with an exhausted look having had all of his mana forcibly released from his body. While verifying this, Suimei quietly undid the spell and released the mana on his mercury katana and released it onto the floor. As if reversing all the actions it had taken to form the katana, the mercury splashed into a puddle and then returned itself to Suimei’s vial. As a guild staff member Dorothea had been attentively watching over the fight, after seeing those two fallen figures she turned towards Suimei with a grand expression of admiration.”

“Wow... You really defeated both of them...”

Dorothea was spacing out a bit at the unexpected outcome. As for the Lefille who had been watching at her side, as expected she was gazing at Suimei without an ounce of carelessness. And as she gazed at him with a stare that felt like it could shoot right through him, she wiped the entire feeling away as she made a gentle smile.

“—Wonderful.”

A single word of admiration. It seemed that the atmosphere in the air was flipped on its head in an instant. Dorothea then stepped towards Suimei.

“Suimei-san. It was a spectacular fight. There aren’t many people who are able to defeat both Rikus-san and Enmarph-san at the same time. Even among the guild members currently in Metel there would only be a handful.”

“Thank you. Well, it just so happened that my strategy had worked out perfectly is all.”

Suimei was stating that it had just been by chance in a self-deprecating way. Dorothea smiled in a way that suggested she didn’t like how he was putting it and poked at him with her words.

“Once again with the humility. As I thought before you’re quite the skilled mage right? Even in the Mage’s Guild, I think you would be considered in the upper class, right Lefille-san?”

“Yeah, I’m not familiar with the strength of the members of the Mage’s Guild in Metel, but surely your skills are quite the sight to see.”

“... By the way, compared to the amazing mages you do know, how was it?”

Suimei had asked about the mages of this world. He had called them ridiculous and idiotic earlier, but he was still interested in their skill and just how strong the top ranked mages in this world were. It was still not clear to him. Skill was important, however the capacity for mana also had a major effect on magic. If it were to match his hopes, than a mage with terrifying amounts of mana would be able to cast magic with a similarly terrifying effect. On top of that Suimei was interested in how much the elements played when they were used as mediation. Depending on the mage’s ability to wield them, their strength should also be proportionately stronger. Dorothea gave a cheerful smile as she answered.

“As I thought you’re interested right. Suimei-san is also a boy~”

“We-well yeah... So?”

“Fufu. If you ask me I think you’re quite good. It may not be the case when compared to the S-ranked mages of the Twilight Pavilion though...”

Dorothea's voice tapered off as she finished speaking. In other words to compare the fight just now to an S-rank mage would be presumptuous. In that case...

"Got it... By the way how would the famous White Flame from the castle compare to those S-rank mages?"

"Lord Stingray? Her Lordship is more famous for her research than her strength. I think she can't really be compared against those who make their living by constantly facing life and death situations right?"

"Heeh..."

Dorothea was proudly boasting of the Twilight Pavilion's guild members. Suimei was completely absorbed in interest at her words. He wouldn't say that Felmenia was skilled, but as a mage her talent was quite promising. Surely he did not think that she was part of the top class of mages but to hear that she would be compared unfavourably against mages who were actively participating in combat was certainly an interesting conversation.

"So what does Grakis-san think?"

"... I didn't think you looked like someone who was so fixated on strength."

"I'm not, I just want a point of reference. Just a general idea of my level. One would normally be curious about how they are assessed right?"

"Fumu, that's right... It is simply my opinion but... Completely based on people I have witnessed myself, the amount of mana I felt from you was not something that could surpass the stronger mages. As for the destructive power of your magic... what you had shown me just now did not serve as a very good reference point."

"Destructive power huh."

As expected, much like in nature magic they seemed to put an emphasis on this. The magician who is feared in the other world, Wolfgang's immense magic would certainly spoil the people of this world. Well then, just how much destructive power was there behind the magic of the highest rank mages?

"If it was the strong mages I had mentioned earlier, then there are some who

could blow away an entire forest or town with a single spell. Though it may be somewhat discourteous to say so, comparing such feats to your magic, I can't really say they are on the same plane."

"For example if we're talking about the Geo Emperor-sama from Nelferia, I hear they can crush an entire battlefield at once. It's truly only outrages things to more outrages things when you talk about people like that..."

"Fumufumu..."

Suimei had gotten a fairly good grasp of things. In his current state where he had yet to ignite his mana furnace, it seems there was a fairly large gap. It wasn't like they could flatten a mountain or destroy a peninsula, but it was still a terrifying amount of destructive power. Well, even in the other world there wasn't all that many people would could do similar things... In any case.

"Thank you very much. This has served as a good reference point."

"No worries, I'm a little uneasy to receive your thanks over something so trivial."

"No, I'm still very ignorant after all. I still have a long way to go as well."

Suimei returned a bow to Lefille. Dorothea cocked her head to the side and continued talking in marvel.

"... Nevertheless, just what exactly are you Suimei-san? You're able to fight that well but I've never once heard your name spoken before, so just where did you come from?"

"Aaah, I'm well, from fairly far away... If I say from the east would you understand?"

Suimei recalled the maps from the castle as he said this. Preparing for just such a conversation about geography, he had studied the maps quite thoroughly. On the east side of the continent, Astel did not have much in terms of diplomatic relations let alone information concerning those lands. It was the perfect section of land to answer the question he had just been asked.

"I see. Certainly we don't have much information on the eastern part of the continent. So is your magic also characteristic of magic from the east?"

“Well yeah.”

Suimei told a lie while pretending it was the truth. It seemed that he had grasped Lefille’s interest as she began speaking.

“Characteristic magic huh...”

“Is something wrong?”

“No, I was simply admiring the splendid techniques that you had displayed. Setting aside the destructive power, the speed of the invocation and needless to say the defensive abilities were excellent. There is still much of the world that I do not know of.”

“Well, yeah.”

She was certainly right, they were techniques from another world after all, so the phrasing might have been a little off. Dorothea then turned towards Lefille as she suddenly remembered something.

“Now that I think of it, Lefille-san is headed towards the Nelferia Empire right?”

“Hm? Yeah, that’s right.”

Dorothea was confirming Lefille’s itinerary with her, it turned out to be a large coincidence for Suimei.

“Heeh. Grakis-san is going to take activity in the Empire?”

“Yeah. From here I plan to take part in activities at the Twilight Pavilion while commuting to the Magic Institute in the Empire.”

“The Magic Institute... if I remember right...”

Magic Institute. According to the documents Suimei had read, it was a large institution in the Empire which served as a place of magic education. It gathered students from Astel, Nelferia and Saadia to research and develop magic on top of keeping the balance of power between the three allied countries.

“Since I’m not particularly familiar with magic, I was hoping to start studying from scratch so that I can strive to improve myself.”

“You want to learn magic?”

“Yeah. Up until now I’ve never seriously made an effort to study magic after all.”

Suimei nodded as he heard this and Dorothea let out a sigh as she began talking.

“Someone as skilled as Lefille would surely have contributed greatly to the guild here in Metel. It’s truly a shame that you’ll be moving to another office. However I still have hope in our new mage Suimei-san!!”

“—No, I’m sorry but once I’ve finished preparing I intend to head straight towards Kurant City.”

After a short pause, Dorothea faced him with a face filled with dreadful vigour.

“... EEEEEEEH!? Weren’t you going to contribute greatly to our office as Metel’s newbie mage who would carry all our hopes as a new shining star!? Weren’t you going to show the mages over at the Mage’s Guild what’s what with a ba~tta ba~tta and receive a second name from Twilight-sama!?”

Suimei was wondering just where her dangerous imagination had taken her.

“... No, unfortunately.”

“No waaay... To think that we finally had some new members who exceeded our expectations after such a long time and they’re just up and leaving...”

“Sorry. I also have things to do.”

“... That’s right isn’t it. Since the both of you are headed towards your goals with such unshakable resolve it can’t be helped.”

“Well, my final destination also happens to be Nelferia.”

“You too?”

“Yeah. I have a lot of information I need to gather, as expected the Empire would be the best place.”

“I see. I don’t know when it will ever be, but I’m looking forward to when we meet again.”

“Yeah, I look forward to it as well.”

“—Well then, I should be going. Suimei-kun, your fight was enlightening.”

As Lefille said these parting words, she turned around with sweet elegance as her red ponytail shook behind her. Suimei accidentally started staring at her as if to scrutinize her. Lefille had noticed his gaze and turned back around.

“Is something wrong?”

“No, it is nothing. Take care.”

“Yeah. Thank you. Well then, see you.”

With this, Lefille headed towards the exit of the training ground. Suimei watched the sight of her elegant back as she left and shut his eyes... if it is her, there should be no problems leaving her as is. She did not seem like one who liked to gossip, it would be fine to leave her alone. It would not sprout into a problem. She also happened to be headed to Nelferia, at the end of the day rumours about Suimei would not spread out in this area... After confirming that Lefille had gone through the door, Suimei spoke to Dorothea without shifting his gaze.

“—Well then, I’d like to ask something simple, with this, what would my rank be?”

As she couldn’t see his face, Dorothea was a little alert as she looked at the ceiling.

“Umm... That’s right. Suimei-san won a crushing victory with both Rikus-san and Enmarph-san as opponents at the same time after all.”

On one hand there was one acting like a child, on the other hand one was just directing a silent gaze towards Suimei. Rikus was turning away making an annoyed expression. Enmarph was grinding his teeth. As expected, having tasted two consecutive defeats, they were both quite mortified. As Dorothea glanced back at those two, she took on her face as a proper staff member and spoke in a business like manner.

“Normally I believe a C-rank would be proper. But you certainly have enough abilities to take activities as a B-rank. I believe that will be most suitable.”

“Heeh...”

Towards the unexpected evaluation from Dorothea Suimei had unintentionally let out his voice. She rated him as B-rank. He had thought it would be around there, but it was still quite the high evaluation. And then, as if extremely pleased with the evaluation, she put on a brilliant smile and faced Suimei.

“It’s amazing right? You’ve become famous in an instant Suimei-san.”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah. I guarantee it.”

Dorothea thrust out her chest in pride enthusiastically asking Suimei to leave it to her. It was certainly true, if a new member suddenly received a high evaluation and soared like a comet, it was obvious that his name would spread. But...

“However— that would only happen if Dorothea and the other three who were present spread rumours of what had happened here to others right?”

“...? Even if we don’t spread rumours if a B-rank suddenly appeared they would easily become famous—”

Dorothea could not understand just what Suimei was talking about and was in the middle of speaking in wonder. By the time they had realized, Suimei, who had not been looking at them, was suddenly wearing well tailored clothes with long coattails. And then, what met them was a sudden indifferent pressure that froze all their muscles to the point where they were convulsing. Rikus who had noticed this quickly, glared at Suimei with hostility.

“... You punk...”

“It’s alright. I will not become famous. Just a moment ago during the evaluation, I was completely and utterly defeated by the two of you and received a very befitting D-rank. The three of you will convey these facts to the other guild members. I am simply a completely normal, second-rate mage without a single redeeming factor who happily became a guild member... Right?”

“—Eh”

Dorothea could not understand just what was going on and was standing there dumbfounded. Rikus and Enmarph were gripped by the tension in their bodies from the overwhelming pressure before them. From the atmosphere, they could guess what was about to happen. That what they had just been told, would soon become their reality. That was precisely Suimei's intent, that's why...

"I must apologize a little to the three of you, however I'll be entrusting you with relaying the correct message here."

"Like it's going to—uu, gu..."

"Ah—"

Suimei turned around and held his hands to their heads. And just like that, he invoked his magic in no time at all. Rikus, who had jumped towards him with the intent of stopping any violence and Dorothea who had just been standing there completely dumbfounded were both unable to offer up any resistance as they fell under Suimei's magic which was designed to grant his desires. The two of them did not have any strong innate resistance towards magic. This result was a matter of course. And then, after falling under the effect of Suimei's magic, their eyes had lost focus and began staring into space blankly. And just like that, they stood stock still without moving. There was one remaining who did not fall under Suimei's spell, Enmarph. He could only demand why while shaking in fear.

"... Why are you doing this?"

"Hm? Why you say? It is just as I said, I just want a suitable rank is all."

"Ridiculous. A high rank is an important factor which influences the jobs that guild members can take. What do you intend by throwing it away yourself?"

As Enmarph asked him this, Suimei was just standing there indifferently.

"No, I don't really intend anything."

"What—?"

"I simply prefer it this way. I do not want the fetters binding me down to increase is all."

“That’s, that’s true but...”

With an increase in rank the burdens placed on him would also increase proportionally. As his senior as a guild member he could certainly understand this point. To Suimei, an increase in responsibility from the guild was simply completely unnecessary to him. Thus he was taking action against it.

“Well, I also wanted to increase my experience fighting the people of this world even if just a bit.”

“This world, you...?”

“That’s not something you need to know.”

Those words, to the people of this world it is certainly something that they would never fail in hearing. However Suimei cut down his question curtly. There was no need for a complete stranger to understand his situation. Even still Enmarph had started speaking in a fluster.

“But, even if you do something about all our memories it won’t matter. The guys I talked to earlier about what happened at the reception desk all know about you right? Just because you deal with us—”

“That’s right. But it’s not like anyone will closely examine the matter. In that case, the result here will generally become the basis of my strength. What happened at the reception desk will simply become an accident and that matter will be concluded. Isn’t that right? Humanity is filled with guys who only like to demean others. If they don’t know that actual situation, instead of believing someone is strong, they would much rather think that they are weak.”

Enmarph had fallen silent, or rather speechless. It was like his voice had been completely stolen away. His eyes had opened wide like he had just seen something completely unfamiliar as he was staring right at Suimei. Suimei could feel just a little sympathy for him and continued the conversation.

“Well, when all’s said and done, I will simply become a mage who knew nothing of the world who let his mouth run off at the reception desk. It’s an easy to accept story right? I’m someone with a lot of self-confidence after all, so it will be easily accepted.”

“... Just what are you intending by becoming a low ranked guild member who

doesn't take requests? No matter how many requests come into the Twilight Pavilion, jobs that you would be able to make a living off of are—"

"There aren't any. Certainly. However in the regard I have also already planted the seeds. Regardless of the number of requests, if I say that I know recovery magic then they would just pull me in right? The power to heal people, no matter where you go there is a serious deficiency of people who wield it. If you don't remember hearing about it— I can do much more than that."

While bragging, Suimei took a step forwards. To Enmarph that one step must have been like the step of a devil.

"Tch, did you think a mage like me would so easily— ku!?"

As Enmarph fixed his posture, he suddenly realized.

"You'll fall for it. You're completely exhausted after all. Right? Kalavinka's sweet voice is just that kind of magic."

"ah———"

Magicians fundamentally are people with a resistance towards magic. A level of resistance was necessary to touch upon mysteries after all. Also, assuming one would have to expose their body to the magic of others, it was necessary to research methods of protecting oneself from the potential of curses and the like by making it difficult for magic to be applied to one's own body. However, this was not an effect that could be constantly maintained at all times. It was dependant on the state of one's body and mind. In that case, what could Enmarph possibly do after being completely exhausted by draining magic?

"It's just a strong suggestion. There's no need to worry, there are no after-effects. You'll go to sleep, and after you wake up, everything will be exactly as I told you. You'll retain your honour, there won't be a single disadvantage for you."

Suimei was a magician. If he were to fight against the mages from this world, it was inevitable that magic would be fired back and forth between them. On top of that Suimei also desired to get a normal evaluation of his fighting ability. Doing both of these things would prove to be difficult. However if he refused to fight against mages and stuck to warriors, his chances to analyze the fights of

other mages would decrease. This was counter-productive to his goal of obtaining more information. And finally, to seal their mouths in the end, mages who held a resistance towards magic would have to be thoroughly exhausted for him to apply his magic on them. So to meet all those conditions...

“I see... That’s why, you—”

“Yeah, that’s why I had to fight both of you at the same time.”

—Suimei sharpened his gaze to the point that it felt like it could freeze the world, and held his hand up to the mage’s head.

Chapter 2 - Towards the Stormy Journey

A few days had passed since Suimei met Lefille, passed the evaluation for his rank and happily registered to the guild. Having woken up early in the morning, he was currently in the inn's garden doing practice swings with his mercury katana.

“Sei, Haa”

He was systematically swinging from top to bottom, properly exhaling with every swing. It was truly practice swings exactly to form. He was quite used to this, but naturally it was not his father, a magician, who taught him swordsmanship, but a kenjutsu dojo near his house. His father put a lot of emphasis on close-combat abilities, however if Suimei had to be taught he thought it would be better to leave it to experts in the field. With this in mind, Suimei had been attending the dojo since his infancy. The reason why Suimei was plainly swinging his sword was also because this was one of their teachings. If one does not swing their sword, it will become dull. Thus Suimei found a time when there was not many people around to practise his swings and martial arts.

“Fuu, that should about do it...”

Having performed his routine practice from start to end, Suimei let out a breath. Compared to his usual habit, the amount of practice was somewhat insufficient, however on this day he could not afford to exhaust himself first thing in the morning. After this, Suimei was going to take part in an escort mission that would take him towards the Nelferia Empire.

Suimei's current goal was to investigate a way to return to his own world, and then create the spell that would return him. For the time being, he would leave the Astel Kingdom to gather information and materials in the Nelferia Empire where the circulation of goods was plentiful. But before heading straight for the Empire, Suimei was headed towards Kurant City which laid on the western edge of Astel. To that end he would be relying on people known as a trade corps who had knowledge of travelling and the lay of the land.

Suimei had been looking through the requests at the guild for this kind of

opportunity, and just the other day, he managed to officially receive just one such commission. The scale of competition had been quite large, but the reason they took him on so easily was likely largely attributed to the fact that Suimei could use recovery magic. At the time that the Dranked Suimei went up to the teller window to take on the request, the required number of escorts had already been met. Nevertheless the organizer had said that there was no such thing as too many people who could use recovery magic and swiftly approved of Suimei's participation. With this, Suimei's plans from here on were decided. All that was left was to depart on his journey from the royal capitol Metel.

“Now then, time to go back.”

While thinking of this, Suimei put away the mercury katana he had been practising with and stood up. He then returned to the inn to make his final preparations before leaving on his journey. While walking towards his room, he went around the corner— and bumped into someone with all his strength.

“Oow... Sorr—!?”

For an instant, Suimei was seeing stars. He had staggered from the sudden shock, and was about to apologize while bowing down, however before he could finish he was forced to stop his apology. The one he had bumped into was the swordswoman who had coincidentally been staying at the same lodgings, Lefille Grakis. But this wasn't the reason Suimei stopped his apology. The two of them were staying at the same inn after all. Bumping into each other was not an impossible occurrence. However, while Suimei was about to break into an apology, he had been baffled by her outfit. Lefille had been running presumably from the outside of the building in only her undergarments regardless of any possible onlookers. Also for some reason her eyes were swollen and red as a large teardrop fell from her eyes.

“ah—”

Lefille had noticed that Suimei was now looking at her current figure. However, she was still standing there in a daze and gasping at the sudden collision. To Suimei the sadness she was displaying was more important than the fact that they just bumped into each other.

“Eh, ah, eh—?”

Suimei finally started to come out of his complete stall, but was still not able to wrap his head around the situation. She was in a state where she was only wearing her undergarment while crying, this was a completely unpredictable situation for him.

“S-Sorry...”

Finally, Lefille regained her senses. She shook off her tears and leaked out an apology. Without listening to Suimei’s questions or answers she ran away further into the inn... After a short while, Suimei having been left alone in complete bewilderment started muttering.

“Just what happened to her...?”

It was still early in the morning. It was still too early for people to generally be awake. Thus there was nobody around to give him an answer.





A few hours had passed since the incident in the morning. Suimei was wearing the local clothing that he had bought the other day in the clothing store. In his hand he was carrying the school bag shaped like a medicinal briefcase that he brought over from the other world. He was currently outside the tall walls which surrounded the royal capitol Metel. After following the highway leading out of the city gates, he came upon the meeting place specified by the commission from the trade corps. From there he casually looked behind him and raised his sight back at the city.

The vital cornerstone which constantly protects the royal capitol of Metel, the large walls. In general even in the other world, cities, castles and fortresses during the Middle Ages were also protected with similar types of walls. It was a mainstream form of protection. Even in this world they had foreign enemies—armies and armed insurgents. In this world if one were to mention a peculiar characteristic of the walls, it would be that they needed to defend against monsters, however—

(It doesn't use the advanced materials that Dorothea had talked about, it does not have any resistance against mana.)

Suimei remembered her words as he looked upon the walls. It was just as he was thinking, the walls which protected Metel were not made of the same materials as the guild's training ground which had a natural resistance towards mana. It was made of simple concrete similar to the Pantheon as well as bricks. It was probable that the raw materials which were strong against magic were only recently discovered, thus they had not used them for the walls yet.

“If it's like this, if powerful magic was just fired at it repeatedly it would just be over huh.”

If the wall was exposed to offensive magic, the material with no defence against spells and with no real strength would collapse. Even more so since it seemed to be a wall built only with a little knowledge of engineering. Despite its majestic appearance, considering the things that existed in this world it made him anxious. No matter how large in scale something is, once it breaks it's useless... Well, there was no purpose in Suimei worrying about it as he shook his

head. The defensive capabilities of the city did not have anything to do with him. No matter how much he looked at it, it couldn't be helped.

Suimei shook off his thoughts about the wall and looked at the nearby meeting place, a crowd had gathered there. They were dressed normally but there was a group who were all dressed in neat and tidy clothes, and about twenty people front and rear who formed an armed group. Adding them all together there were a couple dozen people. In addition there were several wagons. It could pretty much be considered a migrating community, this was the trade corps that Suimei was using to reach his objective.

Trade corps. In the other world it was commonly called a caravan, they were created with the purpose of transporting goods long distances while protected the merchants and goods from dangers such as looting and assault. Multiple merchants and transportation workers would band together as a single organization to achieve their common goals.

(Well, it certainly resembles it anyways.)

Suimei muttered to himself. Just from the looks of it, it fully lined up with the knowledge he had from the other world. However, the surrounding number of armed personal was quite large. If one were to mention a difference it would be just that. This was likely because there were dangers special to this world such as monsters.

The level of civilization in this world was relatively low and also carried various threats that did not exist in the other world. Without gathering a sufficient armed force, it was not possible to journey between cities let alone countries. The maintained road served as a single highway to the next town. There was no way there was any form of lighting along the path, and the requisition of water and lodgings along the path took a considerable amount of time. While thinking of this, Suimei truly gained a new understanding of just how easy it was for humans to live in his own world. While groaning about the differences in convenience between the worlds, Suimei walked up to a single man in the crowd who had a fairly good physique and carried an air of a merchant. According to the information from the reception desk, this was the client who had put in the commission at the Twilight Pavilion.

“Do you have business with me?”

“I am affiliated with the Adventurer’s Guild, Twilight Pavilion. My name is Suimei Yakagi. I have come today at the request to provide escort to this trade corps.”

As Suimei gave his business-like introduction, the man who had been looking at him with suspicious eyes suddenly made a convinced expression.

“Aah, my my how polite. I am the one who put together this trade corps, my name is Gallio. You are Yakagi-dono who is capable of using recovery magic right? Thank you very much for receiving our commission on this occasion. In the case that anyone is injured during our journey up to Kurant City, I leave everything in your care.”

“Thank you, I look forward to working with you.”

The two shook hands and their calm exchange had ended. Gallio then quickly finished up their conversation and headed off towards the other merchants. He was certain to have many preparations to make with others. They were just about to depart, the one responsible for calling everyone together being restless couldn’t be helped. A familiar voice then reached Suimei’s ears from behind him.

“... Could it... Could it be the one over there is Suimei-kun?”

“Eh? Ah, Grakis-san?”

As Suimei turned around, he spotted the figure of Lefille Grakis, who he thought should have no reason to be in this place.

“Grakis-san, why are you here?”

“I will also be accompanying this trade corps.”

“With this trade corps? If I remember correctly, wasn’t Grakis-san’s departure from Metel planned to be at a much later time?”

This was the reason Suimei had not been expecting to see Lefille here at all. The two of them had coincidentally chosen the same inn to lodge at during their stay in Metel. Due to this coincidence, they had multiple opportunities for conversation. During one of these conversations, she had mentioned that her

departure towards Nelferia had to wait for various reasons and would not occur for some time. In spite of that, she was standing here dressed for a journey. It was in complete opposition to what Suimei had heard earlier. Lefille replied with a nod.

“Un. That was originally the case, but two days ago the commission I had taken turned out to be far more profitable than expected. The money I required was gathered up much faster than I planned, so my schedule moved up a little.”

“So all the necessary expenses you had talked about are already gathered?”

“Yeah, that problem’s gone away.”

As she stated this, Lefille showed a calm smile. During their conversations, she had mentioned that she required travelling expenses and the fees to start attending the Magic Institute. Because of this she would only leave for the Empire after gathering the necessary funds in Metel. Setting aside the travelling expenses, it seemed that the amount of money needed to attend the Magic Institute was in no way insignificant. Thus she wasn’t expected to be able to leave any time soon. However she had cleared that goal with a single commission. It must have been quite a difficult request to be so profitable.

“... Though it’s a little impolite of me to ask, what kind of commission was it?”

“It was a monster subjugation request. Just a little further away from here a powerful monster suddenly appeared out of nowhere. They wanted it taken care of right away. Since it was an emergency request the reward was quite large.”

“A powerful monster?”

“That’s right, as powerful as those from the half-giant race, an ogre.”

“... An ogre huh?”

“Yeah, that was the target of the subjugation.”

The name of the monster that Lefille had mentioned was something that Suimei had heard before, but for now he wanted to hear more details.

“You mentioned the half-giant race, is that different from ogres?”

“Ogres? Ogres are completely different from those man eating giants

though?”

“Ha...”

Suimei raised a puzzled voice. In his world, ogres originated from the folklore story ‘Puss in Boots’ as a man-eating giant. It became the general name used to describe the giants of Europe. He heard it translated with that name in his head, yet why were giants and ogres disconnected entities here?

“Incidentally what kind of monster is it?”

“... You don’t know? That’s unexpected.”

“Yeah, I haven’t seen one yet after all.”

“I see, that’s right. That’s not particularly unusual. Strictly speaking ogres are a subspecies of giants. They aren’t as large as pure blooded giants but they are still generally considered to be a very powerful monster. They rely entirely on brute strength. It is said that a single one could bring down a small fortress.”

If it could bring down a fortress it meant it was both formidable in battle and capable of serious destruction. Compared to the idiotic giant who was deceived by a cat to turn into a mouse and was consequently eaten, the ogres here sure were successful.

“Haa... You defeated something like that Grakis-san?”

Suimei breathed out his admiration at her with a little bit of astonishment in his voice. From the flow of the conversation, the giants and ogres of this world were truly dangerous monsters. She had given a very simple explanation, but she had neither boasted nor acted excited about defeating one. She was also quite formidable herself.

“Well I wasn’t alone. Several members grouped together to go defeat it. My own contributions were insignificant.”

She acting humbly with composure. Suimei couldn’t take her words at face value.

“By the way, does that kind of thing appear often?”

“No, setting aside smaller monsters, things at the level of an ogre don’t appear very often. In the first place its native environment can’t be found

anywhere nearby.”

Which meant a series of coincidences brought it here. While Suimei was thinking of the possibilities that could lead to such an event, Lefille added on some more information.

“However, I find it hard to believe it was just a coincidence. There must be a reason it appeared.”

“Fumu...”

As Lefille said this, Suimei fell deep into thought. According to the documents he read in the castle on the ecology of monsters, there was two or three theories that would lead to outbreaks of powerful monsters. One theory stated that if a sudden phenomenon caused the deterioration of their natural habitat, the powerful monsters would abruptly pour out to other lands. Another theory stated that in the case that demons are looking to establish their bloodlines, the less intelligent newborn demons would become monsters with herculean strength. In Suimei’s opinion the second theory was very likely the case right now. The first theory would be very probable if it appeared by coincidence, but the second theory just seemed to fit the mould much better. In that case—

“There are demons here.”

Suimei was not sure where exactly Lefille had fought the ogre or something just like one, but if the latter case was true than they were nearby enough. However, perhaps because Suimei had been mumbling, Lefille did not answer him.

“Grakis-san?”

“... Ah, you may be right.”

Suimei shifted his attention to the delayed agreement of his opinion. Lefille was standing there staring at a single place without moving. Her eyes which usually gave off such a refreshing impression had suddenly clouded over with a gloomy appearance. Something about the conversation had affected her deeply. Lefille must have noticed that Suimei had been knitting his brows, and as if lifting away a veil, her gloomy appearance cleared away.

“It’s nothing. Please pay it no mind.”

“Haa...”

She must have had her own circumstances. While Suimei was thinking about it, he gave a simple, puzzled reply to her. She then suddenly acted like she had something she wanted to say that was a little difficult for her to express.

“Um...”

“...?”

Her voice was nowhere near as dignified as it usually was. She looked somehow embarrassed. She was like a young girl calling out to someone timidly.

“Is something wrong?”

“No, it’s... um.”

Lefille was acting very hesitant. When Suimei looked closely, he could see that she was lightly blushing. As Suimei inclined his head to the side while thinking about what could have possibly happened to her, Lefille made her resolve and began speaking.

“U-umm, I’m sorry about this morning. On top of bumping into you I also showed you something unsightly...”

“Eh, Ah... Aah! No... I should also apologize for my carelessness. I should have been paying attention as I was coming around the corner.”

“No, it was my fault for not paying attention to my surroundings. It isn’t something that you should worry about. Sorry.”

Lefille shook her head as she apologized once more. Suimei decided to ask her more about it.

“... Um, did something happen?”

“That’s... sorry.”

“... No, I should be the one apologizing for asking you something so impolite. Please forget about it.”

“Th-then, I am going to go introduce myself to the organizer of the trade

corps.”

Perhaps she was not able to bear the atmosphere anymore. Without waiting for a reply from Suimei, Lefille hurried off to where Gallio was.



Within an hour of Suimei and Lefille successfully linking up with them, the trade corps departed from Metel without any trouble. This was a favourable beginning for Suimei’s journey. He would like nothing more than for the whole journey to follow this example. Suimei’s job was to escort them all the way to Kurant City. According to his previous investigations, there was quite the distance for them to cover before arriving.

The distance between Metel and Kurant could be covered in several days. In terms of the other world’s Gregorian calendar, this would equate to about a week. Metel was situated a little to the west of the centre of the country while Kurant lied at the western edge. All things considered one week was actually a fairly short trip between two cities. For a modern child like Suimei, having to spend almost the entire daytime walking was a light punishment. As for where he was walking, Suimei had been placed at the rear of the trade corps.

For the purpose of strengthening the forward guard, veteran guild members and mercenaries from other affiliations who were well trusted had taken charge of the front. The other escorts who had accepted the commission, including Suimei, were put in charge of surrounding the cargo to protect it. Lefille was also part of this group and walking beside Suimei. Despite the awkward atmosphere from their earlier interaction the relationship between the two was not bad. While paying attention to the state of the wagon and being watchful of their surroundings, they would talk to each other and engage in frivolous conversation to pass the time. As they were comrades who had accepted the same commission, they naturally opened their hearts to each other. As a pleasant wind blew through the plains, Suimei was speaking to Lefille.

“—So how about the Goddess Alshuna?”

“Yeah, the Salvation Church teaches that she is the existence who properly formed the heavens and earth that we live on. Within the entire world there isn’t an existence which surpasses her in rank. To those who study the mystical

arts there is no higher existence.”

“I see...”

Suimei was putting together his thoughts while listening to Lefille’s explanation. Currently, Suimei was in the middle of receiving a lecture from Lefille about the Goddess Alshuna. He knew that she was someone who frequented the church and took the opportunity to learn the fundamentals, but—

(So that means, the majority of the people of this world see the Goddess Alshuna as a supreme god, they’re monotheist believers.)

Just as he heard, to this world the Goddess Alshuna was the only god who was worshipped worldwide. The transformation of the world from chaos to its current state had been attributed to her as a god. The only other existence of its kind would be the evil god worshipped by the demons. However it seemed the Salvation Church did not acknowledge it as a god.

“Also, even though their races are different, the elves, dwarves, beastmen and dragonnewts all recognize the existence of the Goddess Alshuna.”

“Oh! As expected those kinds of demi-humans are around?”

“That’s right but... Were there none where you came from?”

“Yeah, I’ve only heard about them but nothing more than that.”

It was a bit of a loophole, but Suimei was not entirely lying about it. In fantasy settings they were standard existences to the point where they were pretty much general knowledge. Even so Suimei had not seen a single one in Metel either.

“In that case when you reach Nelferia it will be the first time for you to see them. There is a very large influx of many races there. Though there aren’t many elves or dragonnewts there, I hear that beastmen are fairly common... We’ve gone a bit off topic, but did you have anything else you were curious about with regards to Alshuna?”

“No, this is enough for now. Thank you very much. It was quite educational.”

“You’re welcome, this much was nothing. Nevertheless does the Goddess not

exist in the eastern lands?”

“Hahaha, you might say so...”

Suimei ended up giving a vague answer. She specifically used the word exist when asking, once again it was quite the concrete statement. There was also the way they treated the elements as a concept they could reach with their own hands. To the people of this world the existence of god was not an ambiguous symbol. They were quite resolute that they were actual existences.

While Suimei was thinking about religion, the conversation had ended. He then turned his attention to Lefille who was walking beside him. Unlike the other times he had seen her, she was now carrying a fair amount of baggage. She was wearing the same light armour as when he had first met her and a backpack that was of a reasonable size as to not be unwieldy for her body size. Also on her back was another eye-catching suspicious object.

“... Suimei-kun, what’s the matter?”

“Nothing much, I was just thinking that thing on your back was quite large.”

“Aah, this?”

Lefille turned her head around. What was there was something wrapped in a cloth. Both Suimei and Lefille were around the same height, but this object was easily larger than either of them. Looking at its shape it was likely—

“It caught my interest for quite a while now, but would that perhaps be a sword?”

“Yeah, that’s exactly it.”

Lefille gave a nod, just as Suimei had guessed the huge object was in fact a sword. It was as if it was designed to cut a grizzly bear in two such was its size. Describing it as huge was only suitable. However what Suimei found more astonishing was the fact that Lefille had been carrying something like that on her back while walking without showing any signs of struggling and without a single drop of sweat on her face. Her strength was simply astonishing to him. She also used a fairly thin sword, but it was without a doubt that this girl had quite a lot of strength. How this was possible with her figure was a complete mystery to Suimei even though he possessed the eyes of a magician.

“So why did you choose such a thing as your weapon?”

“This is something that was passed down in my family from generation to generation. After its previous owner, my father, stepped down, I inherited it.”

“Then at first you used something else?”

“No—”

If she had inherited it from her father it meant that there should have been a time where she didn't wield it. However Lefille had denied this. She gripped an imaginary sword and acted as if she was swinging it.

“This had been driven into me since I was a child. From the very beginning I had nothing but training to use a large sword drilled into my head.”

“—In that case you must have quite some confidence in wielding that sword.”

“Fufu... Because of that the only redeeming feature I have left now is my sword.”

“No, I think it's amazing. I also have experience with swords but even if I had the physical strength I don't have any confidence I would be able to wield a sword as large as that.”

Suimei put his respect into words towards Lefille's self-deprecating smile. Swords were not something one could use only with strength. Certainly for just slicing and striking brute strength was all one would need. However when it came to combat ability it was a completely different conversation. On top of the strength needed to just hold the sword, it was necessary to control one's body why wielding it. For Suimei whose primary devotion was entirely in magic, this was completely impossible. Lefille's must have dedicated her life to be able to use something of that size and weight and choose it as her weapon of choice. Perhaps that is why she spoke as she did.

“—It's nothing, with enough practice anybody could use one to split something like an ogre clean in two.”

Suimei was sure that he misheard her. He was just going to pretend that he never heard her composed voice. There was no way anyone could split a giant who could destroy a fortress in two with just practice. The humility she had

shown when she attributed the victory over the ogre to her companions had just been cleanly blown away by her statement. In that case during the guild evaluation fight she must have been holding back considerably. At that level she was a match for the sword masters from Suimei's world. Frankly, she was dangerous. While Suimei was thinking such rude thoughts in secret, this time it was Lefille who would ask him a question.

“Did Suimei-kun have anything drilled into you as a child?”

“I didn't hear, I didn't hea, eh—?”

“Suimei-kun? What's wrong?”

“Eh? Ah, aah, aah. I'm, well, you know, it's this.”

As he finally realized the topic of conversation had changed, Suimei was gesturing to answer her. In an easy to understand way, he thickly gathered mana into the palm of his hand. Lefille casually replied as she came to an understanding.

“Magic right? You're a mage after all, it should have been obvious right?”

“But, at first it was an incomprehensible house though.”

“Incomprehensible house?”

Suimei briefly paused to contemplate before replying with a troubled laugh.

“Yeah. When Grakis-san was taught swordsmanship that had been passed down for generations, how was it?”

“—Fumu, it was something with quite the lineage after all. I would be frequently lectured in length about the reasons that I must learn it. Thanks to that my ears would get sore.”

Using lineage and strict reasons to pass down instructions was something quite common in the history of swordsmanship. While being reminded of that scene, Suimei recalled the time he started his path towards magic. Back when he was a small child, his father lead him for the first time to the single room in the house with a locked door. And then—

“... My father did not talk a lot, so I didn't get anything like that. ‘You must memorize this,’ was all he had said to me in the beginning, that was how it

started...”

“Without any reason?”

“No, there was more or less a reason. However that reason was not something that a child could understand. My father didn’t have any intention to speak of it either. It was considerably later that I would actually hear it.”

Suimei was reminiscing while talking, as expected that scene came to his mind. He came to learn that reason while progressing through his life as a magician. If that did not happen, it may have been that that man was intending to carry the true reason with him all the way to the grave. Now that he thought about it, it could just be that his father taught him magic simply because he felt it was all he could do as a parent to raise him. If it was that clumsy man, it was entirely possible.

“And you were alright with that?”

“Yeah. Learning magic was interesting after all. I never hated it. Well, thanks to that my life ended up getting filled to the brim with hardships though.”

“Is that so?”

As Suimei looked over to Lefille, it seemed that something he said had amused her as she was stifling her laughter.

“... What’s the matter?”

“No, I was just thinking it was unexpected to meet someone similar to myself.”

“I can agree with that if you mean the fact that we’re both wise to the world.”

“Yeah, we’re both wise to the world huh.”

Lefille gave a nod as Suimei hit the mark. On her path towards swordsmanship, surely she had gone through many disasters. Lefille then seemed to remember something, and began speaking.

“—That reminds me Suimei-kun. In the end what rank did you get?”

“Aaaah, they settled it at D-rank.”

“D...? Why? I faced those two from the guild one after the other and received

a conditional B-rank you know? Despite that why would you who took the same two people on simultaneously be a D-rank?"

"Well, that's..."

Before Suimei could finish, Lefille seemed to come to her own conclusion. She narrowed her eyes and the ever-smiling face suddenly let out a chilling voice.

"I see. Even a large guild such as that which operates around the world has that kind of negligence. Fuu. To think that they would manipulate information just to protect their own honour..."

"Wha...?"

"Isn't that right? That's the only thing I could think of that would explain it."

"No, well I guess it is possible to take it like that... but ,well, it's not really..."

"No, I cannot accept it like that. Lets protest to the branch office in Kurant City. Don't worry, I will go with you. If the receptionist tries to brush you away I'll testify as a witness and have them redo the evaluation for your rank."

Lefille was getting carried away with herself while she enthusiastically stated this. It was entirely somebody else's problem yet she would go so far. She was certainly impatient when it came to matters of justice. It seemed that she intended to meddle the moment they arrived, but to Suimei this was unnecessary.

"... Uuum, you know...? The reason was actually because I had requested a D-rank from the three of them after the match. I had them lower the rank myself."

"Lowered? Why would you do that?"

"Dorothea had said that I would become famous, so I was a little hesitant."

"That's... is that alright? In Kurant City and Nelferia, wouldn't a higher rank be convenient? There should be absolutely no advantages to holding onto a lower rank right?"

"I don't plan to make such a troublesome livelihood that I'll need to rely on the jobs from the Twilight Pavilion after all. It's alright."

“... Then what do you plan on doing by going to Kurant City and Nelferia?”

“Well, I plan on gather all sorts of information.”

“Information?”

“Since I’ve come from the east there is still a lot I do not know about, I was thinking of studying.”

“...”

“Is that not a good enough reason?”

As Suimei gave a completely harmless reason for his action, Lefille had become silent while looking at him. Her clear eyes looked at him as if she had seen through him. It was like she was analyzing the differences between his words and expressions.

“Is something wrong?”

“No, I was just thinking that what you just said was a lie... No that’s not quite right, it wasn’t a lie but you also weren’t speaking the truth.”

“... Why do you think that?”

“Woman’s intuition.”

“Well those are certainly some shady words.”

“Fufu, that was just a joke. Even so I’ve always had an eye for judging people. It’s reached the point where I’m able to see through the words of others to a certain extent.”

Lefille had started boasting, and then thrust forwards her conclusion to Suimei.

“—I don’t like to think that you’re lying, but you seem like the type of person to be hiding some kind of secret. I get the feeling that’s the case.”

“... Perhaps.”

Towards Lefille’s keen insight, Suimei shrugged his shoulders and returned a vague answer. It wasn’t something that he would stubbornly hide anyways. And then she started speaking thinking that she may have overstepped her bounds.

“... Well, while that may be true I don’t really have a right to complain. I got carried away by arbitrarily holding the case of your ranking to my standard. Sorry.”

“No, please don’t worry about it. I apologize for causing you to worry about me.”

As Suimei returned her apology with his own, Lefille suddenly put on a grave expression as she had remembered something.

“... That’s it.”

“...?”

Suimei didn’t understand what she was saying. He was trying to think if he had said something that offended her. While he was thinking this, Lefille started talking to him as if he was a troublesome person.

“No, I’ve been thinking this for a while, but I feel the way you talk is a little too reserved.”

“Is that so?”

“That’s right. I’m only a year or two older than you and we’re also companions who have took on the same duty. Isn’t it alright to speak a little more casually? If you do so then exchanging information between the two of us should also go more smoothly. When you call me by my name then Lefille is fine.”

Suimei certainly thought she had a point. The conversation had become something like a senior from school who was not all the much older than him rebuking him for his formality. Now that he thought about it, it was probably alright to do so a while back.

“In that case... No, then it’s okay like this? Lefille?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Suimei-kun gives off the impression of a bad boy after all. That kind of bluntness suits you nicely.”

“The moment I dropped the formalities you sure have gotten mean haven’t you?”

“That’s not true, that was a compliment.”

“Don’t think you can trick me with that kind of expression. I’ve never heard bad boy used as a compliment.”

“Fufufu...”

Perhaps because she found the conversation enjoyable, Lefille had started laughing. After dropping the formalities she no longer felt the need for any restraint. From the very beginning it seemed the Lefille had wanted to have such carefree conversations with Suimei. A voice then called out from the front of the convoy.

“—Oh, time for a break?”

“Yeah, around the watering hole over there.”

Lefille let her eyes wander towards it for an instant. Off to the side of the highway in the plains was a single maintained area. It was a simply prepared resting area in the middle of the path between cities. It was a place that left everything up to the ones who came across it, in this world it was surely normal. While thinking of this, they followed the trade corps off the road towards the resting area. And then at the spot where there was clear spring water available to them, the trade corps began to take their break.

“... Hm?”

As he realized that someone had called out to them, Suimei and Lefille saw some people in the distance. It was not from very far away, just from the other side of the spring water. A girl wearing a robe was waving towards them. Surrounding her were what looked like her companions. From the looks of them, the the girl was a mage and the others were a warrior, a swordsman and an archer. This was indeed the standard party configuration when considering the balance of a game. Setting that aside, Suimei did not recognize any of them and cocked his head to the side.

“They are the companions who defeated the ogre with me.”

“Ah, those people.”

Suimei nodded at Lefille’s brief explanation. These were guild members from the Twilight Pavilion that had taken the commission with Lefille.

“I had gotten along quite well with them. It was only for a little while but we were able to interact quite well.”

As Lefille explained further, the girl on the other side put both her hands to her mouth preparing to yell. Though she was imitating a megaphone, they still couldn't actually hear her voice. From her gestures though it seemed that they were calling Lefille over.

“It seems they're inviting you over.”

“Seems like it. Do you want to come along?”

“... No, I'll pass.”

“I see. Then I'll be going.”

With those parting words Lefille headed over to the girl. After a short while, they had begun engaging in a lively conversation and Suimei could spot her smiling face.

“Companions huh...”

Suimei muttered this to himself. To be honest, Suimei was somewhat envious, however he shook those feelings off immediately. Right now, he had no right to bear those sorts of feelings.

“I wonder how Reiji and the others are doing now...”

Facing the clear blue sky as if to pierce it with his gaze, Suimei was thinking about his friends in a far off place and leaked out his thoughts.



Just how long had this fight been going on? As the light reflecting off his sword vanished, Shana Reiji lunged straight towards his enemy. His enemy had caught his fierce charge in his field of vision, and let out a bizarre scream. Reiji responded with a straightforward slash. From top to bottom. Having drawn out the herculean strength from the divine protection he received from the hero summoning, it was a slash like lightning. And what stood in the way of his strike, were nails. They were incomparably huge compared to a human's nails, they were claws dyed pitch black as if dipped into the jet black abyss. Reiji's blade struck them, and they struck back. The sound of the collision between sword

and claws rung through the air as they struggled against each other.

“—□□□□□□!!”

The enemy's bizarre scream assaulted Reiji's ears violently. Despite being able to speak the language of humans, when their true nature was revealed they reverted right back to that inhuman tongue. While suffering the grating assault on his ears, five nails from its left hand assaulted Reiji from the empty space on his right. Reiji dropped down to evade the attack. It was a disorderly swing made as if trying to swipe away a detestable insect. It had not been aiming, thus it would not hit. Seeing this gap as the perfect opportunity, Reiji defied gravity with a slash from bottom to top using his dual-edged sword. It was a masterful strike which carried a great gust of wind with it, however the enemy's inherent reflexes enabled it to get away with only a grazing strike.

“—O-oh Flames! Stain Scarlet!”

Immediately following the attack, this unaccustomed voice of support came from behind Reiji. It was Mizuki's voice. She intended to cover Reiji. The magic she had fired was low level fire magic, a baptism in scarlet. As the spell was invoked with the simple two word keyword, a band of air in the sky began to burn and drowned the scenery in red. Without waiting for the air to burst into flames, Reiji looked behind him and leaped backwards. In the next instant, as if toying with its target, the flame dove towards the enemy while continuously changing its shape. The flame grew more vigorous as it chased down the enemy. Fire is often compared to a living being. In its current shape it was exactly like a beast chasing its prey with all its strength.

“I did it!”

Reiji could hear Mizuki rejoicing behind him, however the enemy before him was still not dead. Looking closely he could see the shadow of the enemy faintly wriggling through the flames. As Reiji readjusted his stance and brought his sword to the ready, the magic flames dispersed. The enemy had swiped away the flames with its arm. It was now standing atop the embers left behind with its arm hanging out to its side.

It was standing still majestically in the heat haze. It was the last one standing above the ruined ground scattered with bodies. Reiji did not know whether it

challenged him knowing he was the hero, but the one standing before him was definitely his enemy. What he was looking at was not the figure of a human. The enemy standing before him was without a doubt inhuman. It carried a similar silhouette to that of a human, however it was of a completely different race... a demon.

Its appearance resembled that of a demon straight out of a storybook. Before long, the demon began moving. Leaving behind a cloud of dust behind it, it accelerated towards Reiji. It was fast. Its current speed could not be compared to its movements up until this point. Reiji could see a clear vision of himself being torn limb from limb. With its current speed and strength, it was certain to flick Reiji's sword away and strike at him. Thus...

“Burn Boost...”

He spread his mana through his body and called forth the element of fire to become his power. This was the magic that Reiji used the most. Fire became his power in an instant the moment he coldly spoke the magic's keyword. It was a reinforcement spell. Fire wrapped around his body and granted him power. And then, with an overflowing sensation of omnipotence, Reiji gave a piercing glare towards his opponent.

“—■—■!?”

All of a sudden, the demon charging towards Reiji lost its complexion. Up to this point it truly believed that it was about to grasp victory. However it had misread the situation. It had ignored the possibility that Reiji could use reinforcement magic, thus its actions were fatally negligent.

“OoOOOOH!!”

It paid the price for its mistake. Letting out a surging war cry which drowned out the demon's bizarre scream, Reiji reaped the charging demon's head from its neck with his newly activated power... The lingering flames kicked up a minute amount of sand from the ground as it dispersed and vanished. And then, after confirming that there wasn't a shadow of an enemy left in their surroundings, Reiji let out a breath.

“Fuu... We somehow managed today.”



A few days before Suimei departed from Metel, Reiji and company had left the royal castle Camellia and were on their way west to the self-governed state of the Saadias Alliance. This was the first step on their journey to subjugate the Demon Lord. At a glance, this destination did not seem to have any relation with defeating the Demon Lord, however there was a proper reason for it. The hero's job was not solely restricted to defeating the Demon Lord. It was also necessary to defeat the monsters born from the influence of the demons' prosperity. Another important role was to visit neighbouring countries who had lost strength due to the demon invasion and boost the morale of the people. Finally, as Reiji was not yet fully accustomed to fighting, it was important for him to accumulate as much combat experience as possible to prepare for the big fight to come. In the middle of their detour to meet these goals, they had been attacked by demons.

In Reiji's hand was a sword which drank the blood of demons, giving off an ominous shine, an orihalcum sword. This was the finest sword in all of Astel Kingdom. With a single strike, Reiji dispatched the last demon. After confirming that the demons were annihilated, he rushed over to Mizuki's side.

"Mizuki, are you alright?"

Are seeing her breathing heavily with a pale face, he put his worries into words. Mizuki, who was still rattled by the lingering sensations of the battlefield, barely managed to squeeze out an answer.

"Y-yeah. Somehow. But..."

"But?"

"This is a battle, right? With the enemy..."

"... Yeah."

Reiji gave a heavy reply to Mizuki. Up to this point, Reiji's party had fought monsters on multiple occasions. However Mizuki did not participate in any fighting until now. Based on the judgment of the knights accompanying them and Titania, they deemed it necessary for Mizuki to get somewhat accustomed to the scene of a battle first. This was why up until now she had only been

looking from the sidelines. It was a fact that Mizuki's skill with magic were comparable to both Titania and Reiji's, however it was still decided that she needed time to familiarize herself with battle, hence this battle was the first time she had actually fought.

“Mizuki. Like I thought it's better for you not to unreasonably...”

“Uun. As expected I can't just stand by and watch. Sure it was my first fight, and the demons were really scary, but since I'm coming along I want to help everyone.”

“Mizuki...”

“... I've said this a lot already but... Un, you're amazing. Reiji-kun looked totally calm even the first time.”

“Uun. That's not true. Even I got scared during the first fight. Even though I've gotten slightly used to it my heart still won't stop thumping.”

Reiji returned a smile to try and soften Mizuki's mood, even though he said that with the intent of consoling her, it was also the truth. Similar to Mizuki, Reiji could still not completely shake off his sense of fear. Despite saying that he would go and defeat the Demon Lord, just fighting the Demon Lord's regular soldiers had left him in this kind of state. It was far too late for it, but Reiji felt just how little thought he had put into this.

(... Suimei.)

As he was thinking of this, the image of his friend flashed across his mind. The friend that he parted with at the castle, Yakagi Suimei, had said that it was unreasonable, that there was no way they could do it and would repeatedly deny the possibilities one by one. Reiji finally realized just how right Suimei had been to say such things. Compared to Reiji who attained power and thought himself almighty— no, precisely because he had not been granted any power, he was capable of viewing the circumstances properly.

When Reiji had agreed, he had gotten carried away with his ideals. His every day life had suddenly become extraordinary. He had come to a fantasy world completely separate from modern civilization. When they implored him to save them with their earnest wish, when they said if it was him then he could

definitely do it in an absolutely baseless declaration... Reiji had the misapprehension that he could do it. He had made light of the situation. The only way to describe his actions would be foolish. There was no other word Reiji would use to describe it himself.

Certainly it was possible for them to wipe out the demons depending on their future actions. A plan had been put in place... However even so, the fact would not change that he had dragged in one of his precious friends, a girl, due to his stubborn egoism.

(Sorry...)

Reiji hung his head down and looked over to Mizuki who was still visibly breathing roughly. He had apologized so much to her already. Yet once again he apologized to her in his heart. It could be said that he was simply deceiving himself by apologizing silently to others over his guilty conscience.

“... Let’s go somewhere else.”

“... Un.”

Mizuki nodded to Reiji’s suggestion, and they distanced themselves from the corpses of demons which littered the battlefield.

“—Mizuki! Are you safe!?”

A girl’s voice called out to them from the side. It was their companion, Titania. It seemed that she had also defeated the demons in another place. Accompanied by a knight in the prime of his life behind her, she was headed towards Reiji. Mizuki raised her face and put on an awkward smile as she replied.

“Un, I’m okay.”

“Thank goodness... It seems that nothing serious happened.”

“Reiji-kun was here after all.”

After their short exchange, Mizuki and Titania shared a hug. With one stouthearted smile and one relieved smile, the atmosphere in the air finally relaxed.

“Tia, thanks for your hard work.”

“Thank you for your consideration, Reiji-sama.”

“No... Ah, thanks for your hard work as well, Gregory-san.”

Reiji turned towards the knight who had been accompanying Titania, Gregory. As usual he replied with a very serious expression on his face.

“No, all I did was provide support for her Highness the Princess. Your gratitude is more than I deserve.”

“That’s not true.”

“No, I cannot possibly even compare to her Highness the Princess...”

Gregory lowered his head deeply.

“Haa!? G-Gregory!!”

“Eh, ah, no. Ahem! It is nothing. I will protect your Highness the Princess.”

When Titania raised her voice, Gregory for some reason corrected himself.

“It’s fine as long as the two of you are safe... So Tia, how was your end?”

“Yes. Everything has been cleared up. We did not let even a single demon escape.”

“As expected of Tia. You’re so reliable.”

“No, I’m... Compared to Reiji-sama’s strength I still have a long way to go. Also..”

“What’s wrong?”

“... The demons had killed all of our horses. My apologies.”

“... I see. I feel sorry for them since they carried us all this time, but I’m glad as long as you are all safe, Tia.”

“Reiji-sama...”

Titania seemed very touched by Reiji’s words of encouragement. It was going to be difficult to proceed having had all of their horses killed, but even so not a single person had been killed and that was something to celebrate for Reiji. Suddenly a shaky voice came out from Reiji’s side.

“... Tia is also okay with fighting huh.”

“Yes, I am more or less used to it. I have previous combat experience after all.”

“...? Even though you’re a princess why do you have that kind of experience?”

“Fueh!? Ummm it’s! That’s, umm...”

“...?”

Titania had suddenly gotten quite flustered and was panicking. Mizuki and Reiji both cocked their heads to the side. They both had no idea just why she was so flustered. It was the first time they had seen her like that. Before long, she managed to calm herself down and cleared her throat.

“W-when it was decided that I was chosen as an attendant for the summoned hero, it was determined that this sort of training was necessary to prepare for our current situation.”

“Is that so...?”

“That’s right! That’s exactly right!”

Reiji let out a long breath in confirmation. He came to the understanding that this was why she was so capable in a fight. Even in all the fights with monsters up to this point she had participated proactively. He had his doubts about the figure of a mage who was able to fight so hard, but he came to accept her explanation. Reiji turned to take a quick look at Mizuki. Somehow her figure seemed far more unreliable. This was probably because her insecurity showed in her expressions. It was like she was being left behind during the fights by those with power. It couldn’t be helped. Noticing Mizuki’s insecurities, Titania put on a smile and turned towards her.

“Mizuki, there is no need to pay it any mind. At first I was the same, no for me it was even worst than how you are now.”

“... Is that so?”

“Yes. Until I had gotten accustomed to combat, my state of mind was very similar to you. After my first fight ended, I had dropped the sword in my hand and fallen to my knees.”

“Even though you fight so calmly?”

“It’s precisely because I have that kind of experience that I can do so. For the purpose of protecting everyone, I had to get stronger. Be confident in yourself Mizuki. It has just begun. Let us go forth one step at a time.”

“... Un. Thank you, Tia.”

Mizuki gave a strong nod to Titania’s encouragement. It seemed her anxieties had been blown away. Reiji was smiling off the side seeing that the two of them were getting along so well. If it was going to be like this, he could do it. Just a few moments ago, he had been tormenting himself over his poor decisions. But after seeing the two of them showing such courage, he was convinced that he had made the right choice after all. Even though the atmosphere had been so good and Mizuki had finally relaxed, she suddenly frowned.

“I wonder if Suimei-kun is alright...”

“Suimei? If I remember correctly he said he was going to leave the castle shortly but...”

“Un. Outside the city... Right outside should be safe, but the highway and its surrounding can be quite dangerous. If he ends up leaving the city to go somewhere else and meets monsters let alone these demons...”

“That’s right. Since he didn’t want to take part in the subjugation I don’t think he would leave the city on his own, but if he leaves the city walls and meets a monster, Suimei who has no combat strength would probably be helpless...”

It was just as Titania hypothesized. Suimei did not receive any divine protection from the hero summoning. Reiji understood why the two of them would think that way. However Reiji did not actually agree with them.

“No, if it is Suimei he’ll be alright.”

“...? Why does Reiji-sama think so?”

“Un. Suimei knows kenjutsu after all. Even if something attacks him he should be able to skillfully handle it.”

“Wha– Suimei knows how to use a sword!?”

As Reiji nodded to confirm, the two girls exchanged glances. Contrary to Reiji’s expectations Mizuki also did not seem to know this. When Titania gave

her a look, Mizuki shook her head in return. Mizuki then knit her brows and turned to Reiji.

“But Reiji-kun. Suimei-kun wasn’t part of the kendo club you know? He travelled abroad a lot so he said being part of a club would be impossible right?”

“Suimei didn’t go to the club at school, he went to a dojo in his neighbourhood.”

“Umm.... Was there even a kendo dojo in that neighbourhood...?”

“It’s that one. The one for self-defence.”

While Mizuki was trying to recall the layout of Suimei’s neighbourhood, Reiji gave her a short answer. However when Mizuki recalled the place he was talking about, she cocked her head to the side.

“That place? The one which teaches self-defence intended for women? It’s certainly famous in the neighbourhood, but it isn’t a kendo dojo you know?”

“Un. Normally they only teach self-defence as advertised on the sign. But originally it was a dojo for ancient martial arts. It seems they teach all sorts of things to certain applicants.”

“Really!? It was that kind of place!?”

“Yeah. That’s what Suimei said.”

“You’re kidding... Even though I’ve been there with the girls from class... On top of that ancient martial arts...”

Mizuki was greatly surprised by this fact. Perhaps it was even more surprising because she had attended the same dojo to learn self defence. Next it was Titania who had questions.

“From what I understand Suimei had gone to a martial arts school?”

“Yeah. It was only at the level of our world though, it can’t be compared to the people who do martial arts here. Suimei is a swordsman.”

“Is that so? At a glance he seemed like someone who would have nothing to do with violence though.”

“Un. Usually you can’t tell at all. However it seems he is quite skilled. This is all hearsay though.”

“It’s to that level...?”

“Though like I said before it is only to our standard...”

“... What a blunder. To think I would misread someone like that...”

“Eh?”

“N-no, it is nothing. Ohohohohoho...”

For some reason Titania had started laughing unnaturally as if to hide something. Reiji had no clue what she was trying to say. While he was looking at her with curiosity, Titania suddenly put on a serious expression.

“H-however Reiji-sama, even if that is the case I do not think it is enough to make a connection between that and his ability to escape from any difficult situation.”

“That’s true, but—”

It was just as Titania said. Reiji also know well that just by knowing how to use a sword there was no real connection between that and being safe. It was true that Suimei did not have any experience with fighting monsters. Even so, for Reiji, this was not enough to declare that Suimei would be in mortal danger.

“Suimei, despite his appearance, he is quite cunning... Once in a while he’ll sometimes thoughtlessly do things that are outside of common sense, but he is fundamentally a cautious person.”

“Even if he encountered a monster, you think he would be able to skillfully compose himself? It’s often said that just from being glared at by a monster many people lose the ability to even move.”

“That true. But unexpectedly, Suimei would probably take it in stride.”

“Is that so...?”

Titania didn’t seem convinced as she scrunched up her face. This was likely because of the familiarity the people of this world had with danger. However Reiji knew that Suimei had an unexpected personality fairly devoid of

cowardice. In the past when they had been surrounded by delinquents or gangsters, he would only fearlessly say things like 'that's it?' with complete composure. During the entire fight, each and every time, he would have the same tired expression on without fail.

"Well, that's about why I'm not particularly worried."

"If Reiji-sama says so."

Titania had given up on arguing and decided to believe in Reiji. At the end of that conversation, Mizuki had suddenly thought of something and turned to Reiji.

"... Hey Reiji-kun. Does Suimei-kun say things like 'I am a something or other style swordsman Yakagi Suimei'? Can he use some amazing kenjutsu?"

"Eh? No matter how you look at it that's a little... uh, Mizuki!?"

"Uuu~What the, Suimei-kun is way more of a chuunibyou isn't he!? Hiding his true identity and going to an ancient martial arts school, that's just— unfair! Unfair unfair super unfair!"

"Ahaha..."

Mizuki wasn't even listening to Reiji as she started to get angry. It seemed she was far more angry about the fact that he had learned ancient martial arts than she was at the fact that he had hidden it.

"But it's not like Suimei makes chuuni statements like Mizuki did. I don't think you can really call him a chuunibyou... Ah."

Reiji stopped himself as he realized he had just spoken the taboo word. It was too late to turn back. As he turned slowly towards Mizuki, she was facing him with a strange smile.

"Re~i~ji~ku~n~"

"S-s-s-s-sorry! I just!"

"You promised! You're not allowed to forget! Absolutely! It's a-b-s-o-l-u-t-e-!"

"Y-yes!"

Reiji had promised to never speak of it, Mizuki's sealed past. It was here

secret garden. Though Reiji didn't actually know what she meant by secret garden. Titania then cutely put her finger on her mouth and tilted her head to the side.



“Mizuki. What is ‘chuunibyou’?”

“Eh!?!... Um, that’s...”

“What is it? Don’t tell me it is some kind of horrible illness?”

“Y-y-y-y-y-yes yesyes!! That’s it! That’s exactly it! Chuunibyou is a sickness from the other world that infects the majority of children in their early teens. Even if they are cured afterwards there are dreadful after-effects that are left behind. It’s a truly evil illness!”

Mizuki fearfully stumbled through a reply to Titania’s question. While waving both of her hands in front of her wildly, she tried to deceive her with all of her

might. It was painfully obvious that her flustered actions were intended to misdirect Titania. In a sense she was getting her just desserts. Though it seemed that Titania would let it go as her expression suddenly turned grim.

“Setting that aside, about the Demons just now.”

“U-un. Now that you mention it that’s right. Why have demons appeared in a place like this?”

“Demons, huh...”

“Yes...”

Titania nodded. Just like Mizuki had said, the sudden attack from the demons was on her mind. Once again recalling the battle with the demons, Mizuki started to show an anxious expression. Reiji stated his own opinion on the matter.

“The demons are beginning their invasion of the Nelferia Empire... Is that a possibility?”

“L-like I thought, is that how it is...?”

“Un. If you think about it reasonably, I believe it is the most likely scenario. If the demons are here this far it could only mean that right?”

As Reiji explained his conjecture, Mizuki’s expression stiffened up. It couldn’t be helped. She was still not accustomed to battle, yet they were thrust into a situation where another battle with demons was very likely. On top of that the demons were extremely powerful. If it were a monster, the magic that Mizuki had used earlier would have defeated it. However the stronger types of demons would not even be burnt let alone injured. The last demon that they defeated was just one such case. However Titania raised her objection to Reiji’s conjecture.

“—No, I do not believe that is yet the case.”

“Why it that, Tia?”

“Yes. As Reiji-sama had said, this is the Empire’s territory. If there are demons appearing here then it is normal to think that the invasion of the Empire has begun. But in reality, after the demons had taken down Noshias, they have not

made any large movements. To get this far there are still two countries and a mountain range to pass through. If they took a detour they would have to pass through the Saadias Alliance to reach this point. No matter how you look at it that sort of reckless forced march is simply out of the question even for the demons.”

“I see. It’s just as Tia says. Even if they forcefully marched this far it would only isolate their troops right?”

“That right. To have their army advance this far without first bringing down the two countries before it would serve no advantage for the demons.”

“Yeah.”

Just as she had said, if the army made any major movements to reach this point, they would simply have isolated themselves. If one with proper intelligence were to move a large number of troops, it was necessary to secure a supply line and garrisons. A route would be necessary to safely replenish troops to the front line. This was the only way to move an invasion forward steadily.

“But it’s a fact that demons were here. Even though the demon army did not come this far, there were demons who did.”

“It is just as Reiji-sama says. That’s the problem on hand...”

“What does Gregory-san think of the situation?”

“... My humblest apologies, but I could not even begin to imagine the thought process of demons.”

“Was there anything at all that you noticed? Even the most trivial of matters would be fine.”

“... Hero-dono. More importantly I believe it is vital that we should quickly distance ourselves from this place.”

Gregory’s sudden proposal to evacuate had put Reiji on edge as he imagined the implications behind his words.

“—By that do you mean there are demons nearby?”

“N-no. I do not believe that is the case...”

Reiji could not understand why Gregory would suggest such a thing if demons were not nearby. The discrepancy between the situation and his words left Reiji with an uncomfortable feeling. On top of that, Gregory, who had denied the possibility of more demons, was acting awkward. Normally such a suggestion would come after sensing danger nearby. But he had done so even though it was not the case. Titania then turned towards Gregory.

“Gregory. I also believe that we should head towards a safe location. However it is more important for us right now to get a better grasp of what the demons are doing. If we move around without thinking about it all, it may lead to even more danger.”

“... Ha, it is just as your Highness the Princess says.”

Gregory honestly bowed down to Titania’s words. However his behaviour earlier was still on Reiji’s mind. His words were spoken like he was trying to drive them onward in a hurry. Setting that aside, Reiji spoke of another possibility to Titania.

“... Tia. Is there a possibility of demons that aren’t from the north?”

“No. I do not believe that could be the case. All of the world’s demons were driven north by the power of a previously summoned Hero-sama. It should not be possible that they are occupying any other land.”

Reiji was stumped. No matter how much they talked about it they could not find the answer. Suddenly, the sound of a galloping horse and a voice calling out to them came from afar.

“R-Reiji-sama!!”

The owner of the voice was, like Gregory, one of the people from this world who had come to support Reiji in his journey, a young knight. The knights were occasionally tasked with separating from them to keep in contact with the castle. The previous time Gregory had been the one to do so. This time, in his stead was this young knight and one other who had returned to the castle. The young knight soon approached the group and dismounted his horse.

“Roffrey-san.”

“Ha! Reiji-sama, I have returned.”

“Roffrey. Are you in good health?”

As Titania casually asked about his safety, Roffrey stood dumbfounded for an instant, and then immediately began panicking.

“A-A-A-A single knight such as I does not deserve the consideration of the Princess—”

“Roffrey.”

“H-Ha! No, more importantly over there...”

As Gregory let a cough and called out to him, Roffrey jumped in place and was now flustered for an entirely different reason. His soaring heart had been brought back down to the ground. Seeing him question the scenery around them, Reiji gave him an answer.

“Aah, you saw that. Just a moment ago, they had attacked us and we struck them down.”

“All of those!?”

“Yeah.”

“As expected! Reiji-sama...! Ah, no. Not that!”

Roffrey showed no signs of calming down anytime soon, so Gregory spoke to move him along.

“What’s the matter Roffrey? You’ve been quite agitated all this time. Also what happened to Luke? He had gone with you to contact the castle, why has he not returned?”

“Ha, allow me to speak of all of it.”

Roffrey took a brief pause, and then began explaining.

“It’s a little abrupt, but we must distance ourselves from here as quickly as possible.”

“Why is that?”

“A large force of demons seem to have passed through the territory of Thoria and Shaddock and broken through Astel’s northern border.”

Roffrey delivered the astonishing news with a firm expression. Thoria and Shaddock were countries situated to the north of Nelferia and Astel. Titania lost her complexion at the sudden news and raised her voice.

“Is that the truth, Roffrey!?”

H-Ha. This was a report from the castle, it is probably...”

Titania drew closer to Roffrey as she asked. Completely overwhelmed by her vigour, Roffrey gave out a weak reply. Reiji picked up on the phrasing of his words and questioned him.

“Roffrey-san. What did you mean by ‘seem to have’?”

“That’s... The report came from the night guard at the border who spotted traces of what seemed like a demon force by coincidence. I also do not know all the details...”

“So, what were those traces?”

“Ha, in the area they had spotted footprints that differed from those left by monsters as well as traces of mana.”

“Roffrey. Did anybody actually see any demons?”

“No, it seems that they are not moving openly. There are no reports of witnesses or attacks.”

“... Why is that? If there are demons you would normally think that they would be spreading havoc right?”

Everyone nodded to Mizuki’s reserved statement. Demons viewed humans with intense hostility, they were the type who always acted in accordance with this instinct. If they were passing through borders, surely their goal was to cause chaos. Even if they had some other objective in mind, the fact that they were moving as a large army stood in opposition to that idea. The most optimal use for a large force was spreading havoc and violence after all.

“If that’s not the case this time, our information is too lacking or its authenticity isn’t credible...”

“Would the ones who attacked us by any chance be the ones who broke through the border?”

Roffrey made the connection between the report and the attacking demons. More specifically, the demons were likely a single part of the larger force. Then Gregory spoke to Roffrey again.

“So what about Luke?”

“Ha, to make sure the message was safely delivered, he was headed to Kurant City. He will rendezvous with us another day within the Empire’s territory.”

Gregory gave a brief nod and acknowledgement to Roffrey’s report. Titania made a grim expression and spoke.

“... This has become quite bad.”

“You mean that our movements have been exposed to the demons? Normally that kind of thing should be impossible right...? Ah, but if there was something strange...”

The attack by the demons seemed too much like a coincidence. Even if they had known of the hero summoning and pushed in to attack him, the number of demons present was far too naive to actually defeat the hero. Pondering just what could be happening, Reiji closed his eyes.

“... It is very likely that the demons know that a hero had been summoned but have not yet grasped any of the fine details? So perhaps the ones just now were a group performing reconnaissance in force.”

“I see. So they were in the middle of searching for opponents who might be the hero?”

If they had known of the existence of the larger force it was very likely for their opponents to escape. To prevent that they were moving in secret using smaller forces to search. Mizuki and Titania were both taken aback by this conclusion.

(...But)

To Reiji, if that was the case, there would be at least one among them who would be there to communicate with the main force. However there wasn’t a demon there to seemed to fit that role. It was too soon to determine that their conclusion was correct. Even if their position had not been exposed, it was a

serious situation. As Reiji was coming to this conclusion in his mind, Mizuki spoke her mind.

“If they are nearby it is bad. All the horses except for Roffrey’s were killed by the demons...”

“Un. In the worst case we would not be able to run away. We would be forced to face them.”

“Roffrey. Was there any conjecture as to the scale of the force of demons?”

“It was likely over a thousand...”

“A thou....”

“... That’s...”

Mizuki and Reiji were both left speechless at the number. It was definitely not a number that they would be able to face. Even with the number of demons who had just attacked them, defeating them had taken quite a bit of time. A now there was a thousand demons. As Reiji imagined the scene of all of them pouring down at them, he recalled Suimei’s words. Mizuki then raised her voice with a flustered expression.

“I-in that case we should quickly get away from here!”

“No, Mizuki-sama. It is not a good plan for us to run away recklessly. The only horse is the one I’m riding. We should decide on a route and make sure to keep water and food in mind...”

Roffrey returned a very reasonable proposal to Mizuki who had begun panicking. Everyone nodded towards him. For some reason Titania questioned Gregory, who had not been making any contributions during the whole conversation.

“Gregory. What do you think we should do?”

However, Gregory did not answer. Everyone’s gaze lined up on him. Reiji could hear his muttering as he quietly said, ‘It should be a suitable time now...’

“Gregory?”

“...Concerning this matter, there is no reason to be worried.”

These were the words that came out of his bitter face. It was the first sign of the storm on Reiji's journey.

Chapter 3 - The Demon General Rajas

A few days had passed since the trade corps that Suimei was escorting had left the royal capitol Metel. On the way they had not encountered monsters, bandits or even heavy rain. They had simply been advancing while obliging themselves to the small villages and relay stations along the path. Just the other day they passed over what was deemed to be the major obstacle of the journey, the mountains, and were now in the middle of a fairly rugged road. According to the others in the trade corps, they were about two thirds of the way to Kurant City. Once they passed through the foot of the mountain and the basin, Kurant City would be right there.

However, even if the world is different, its foundation is the same. The thing known as the turning point would not so easily be passed. They were now beyond the foot of the mountain within a forest. Many trees crowded around them sporadically. Normally this would be the scenery where sunlight would be filtering through the trees, however due to the overcast sky it only presented them with a gloomy atmosphere. The scenery resembling ash in the sky left them with an uncomfortable feeling. As if aiming for this exact atmosphere, Suimei could sense a dangerous presence in the vicinity.

“... Suimei-kun, have you noticed?”

“Well, more or less.”

Suimei only knew that there was a presence in their surroundings. Ever since they had passed the foot of the mountain into the forest, he had felt a bad premonition prickling at the back of his neck. While focusing on the presence which was approaching them from the side, Suimei raised his suspicions of the presence which clearly did not seem human.

“... Hey, are those monsters? Somehow it doesn't feel like a human...”

“No, those aren't monsters. It's demons.”

“Mu... Demons?”

The two had talked about the possibility before they departed, it seemed that

there was in fact a connection after all.

“... You seem awfully certain of that. It isn't just a possibility?”

“Yeah, I'm certain.”

“Why?”

“... I know those things quite well. I can say it without a shadow of doubt. There's no mistake.”

As Suimei asked again, Lefille's reply came out stiffly. As the dangerous presence drew nearer, the others in the trade corps noticed and all movement came to a sudden stop. Shortly after, a warrior-like adventurer ran towards the two of them while paying attention to the sound of his steps. His complexion was quite bitter probably because he had a proper grasp of the situation.

“Oi.”

He shot off a simple voice towards them, and Lefille affirmed his suspicions.

“Yeah, we realized as well.”

“Oh? Oooh... I see, then I'll make it quick. According to one of the mages, the ones approaching us seem to be monsters. Gallio's intention is to meet their ambush here.”

Unlike Lefille, the other adventurers judged that they were monsters. In either case, the fact that they would meet them here would not change. However Suimei did not quite agree with the plan brought up by the adventurer.

“We'll meet them here?”

“Yeah, that's right. Is there a problem with an escort fighting?”

“No, that's not the issue, what will the merchants do?”

If they were to meet the enemy here, it was certain that the merchants they were here to protect would be in danger. Thinking about it normally, to make sure that they do not get caught up in the fighting, they would first have the merchants retreat to a safer place. The road just past the bottom of the mountain was still very rugged, it was not a very easy terrain to hide oneself in. Lefille added on to Suimei's doubts.

“Perhaps we could have them go ahead and then intercept the ambush?”

“No, that won’t do.”

“Then they could go further into the forest?”

“No, that also won’t work.”

The adventurer shook his head at both suggestions. Lefille’s plan was a sound one, to allow the merchants to continue along the path and stop the ambushers where they were. To take on an ambush this was logically the best plan. However the adventurer seemed intent that they would not be taking this action. He then cleared up their doubts with a stern look.

“...It seems that there are also monsters straight ahead of us. Seeing how there are monsters to our side as well, it is possible there are also some behind us. In the worst case we may be completely surrounded. In that case instead of moving the merchants around carelessly, it would be better to gather them in a place that we could keep our eyes on them... That was the conclusion we made.”

Suimei was convinced by his explanation. However Lefille still had more to say.

“Who will be attacking?”

“Eh? Attacking? No, there’s no one..?”

“Why is that? If there is the possibility that we are surrounded, is it not necessary for us to break through their formation?”

“Ha? T-there should be no reason for us to break through. If we simply strengthen our defences a couple monsters shouldn’t pose any problems.”

“... I see.”

Lefille withdrew quietly at the adventurer’s objection. She may have just wanted to avoid getting into an unproductive dispute. However, Suimei could hear a bit of disappointment mixed into her voice.

“That should be all you need to hear right? Then I’m returning to my post. I’m leaving the cargo in your hands.”

“Sorry, but may I say one more thing?”

“... What is it?”

“I don’t know about what’s coming from the front, but the ones from the sides are not monsters, they’re demons. Please inform Gallio-dono of this fact.”

“Ha? Why do you know such a thing?”

“From experience. This is not the presence of monsters.”

The adventurer let out a small groan from her statement. After giving Lefille a scrutinizing look, he spoke.

“... Understood. I’ll at least let him know of the possibility.”

After agreeing, the adventurer swiftly moved back to his post. As the conversation had come to an end, Lefille took the weapon that she had been carrying on her back and removed the wrappings that had been covering it. What was revealed was an enormous sword. Using his eyes to estimate, Suimei guessed the length of the sword from its tip to the pommel was about 180 centimetres. It had the length of a zweihander and the blade was as thick as a claymore. Its form resembled that of an elongated triangle. It was an intricate sword made in this world. It was not not gaudy, yet it gave off a beautiful red and silver shine. Compared to the swords Suimei had seen the others carrying, it completely seemed like an out of place artifact.

Lefille carried the sword frivolously with a single hand. The small amount of sunlight which broke through the clouds shimmered on her blade. Suimei was curious where exactly the source of her strength to wield such a blade came from. He could not figure it out, but he knew for sure that she was experienced with that sword. All of a sudden Lefille began walking towards the presence which was approaching them from the side, those that she believed to be demons.

“O-oi, Lefille?”

“Suimei-kun. I’m sorry, but I will be taking the initiative and heading off to attack them.”

“Heading off... It it alright to do that arbitrarily? They’re still quite a distance away, shouldn’t you at least consult with Gallio-san and the others?”

Lefille closed her eyes and shook her head.

“No, look around you.”

Looking around, Suimei could only see the merchants and escorts hurriedly preparing for the dangerous situation approaching them.

“The other adventures and mercenaries are completely fixated on only defending. Do you understand?”

“Yeah, seems that way. They said so earlier as well.”

“That won’t do.”

“Mu...”

Lefille flatly put down the plan that the trade corps was adopting. The way she was speaking reminded Suimei of her words before.

“... That’s... The talk about breaking through the demons?”

“That’s right. Demons are without exceptions beings who know only how to steal, destroy and kill. Above all else their desire to attack is strong. They would only be encouraged by us taking a defensive formation. If we want to deal with those things, just defending will do us no good.”

“Even if you say it will do us no good, I’m well aware of the dangers of just defending. But I can’t really say that jumping in on your own would be good either. Just like defending is dangerous wouldn’t attacking also have its fair share of danger? I think it would be okay assuming we are surrounded, but I still can’t say it is the most reasonable course of action.”

Suimei was trying to hold Lefille back from doing something unreasonable. It may have just been the opinion of an amateur, but Suimei did not believe that the mish-mash forces of the corps could accomplish Lefille’s goals.

“So are you advising that we should stay and defend?”

“No. I’m saying that it is unreasonable for Lefille to cut through on your own.”

Suimei was not underestimating her strength. But it was true he was not familiar with her strength either. As a magician, he did not have an eye to judge the level of a swordsman at first sight. He didn’t know her strength. He did not

know the scale of the enemy's strength. He simply did not have enough information. Lefille then turned towards Suimei and gave him a nod like she understood what he was thinking.

"Your point is certainly valid. But what I said still stands. I know those things very well. They are not opponents whose strength I would misread after all this time, also..."

"Also?"

Lefille paused for a moment. Suimei felt goosebumps for an instant as the atmosphere around her darkened.

"... Also, you won't be able to wipe them out to the last like that right?"

The cold beauty's expression clouded over for an instant, this was in no way because of the overcast sky. The face she was putting on was the dark shadow behind her righteous heart as a swordswoman. Before he knew it, the shadow that had cast over her expression revealed a single red eye glimmering with anger and hatred. It was an eye intending to pierce through the bitter enemy who was not yet here. Suimei was sure there was something behind that gaze. Just how tightly were the existences known as demons tied to this girl's destiny?

"Suimei-kun. Demons are evil. From the time they are born to the moment they die, they are beings who will never live a just life. That's why... That's why those things must be cut down. I will kill them all, without leaving a single one left."

Lefille crushed the last of Suimei's objections with a dark determination. With a brief 'That's how it is,' she once more turned her back to Suimei.

"O-oi, Lefille!"

Suimei called out to her with a flustered voice. As if to apologize for the dark atmosphere she had created, Lefille returned a bright smile to him.

"Thank you Suimei-kun. But there is no need to worry about me. Please take care of the cargo as we had been told. See you."

As she said these words she went deeper into the forest. Along her path were

surely the demons she intended to defeat.

(... She's fast.)

It was like a red gale cutting through the trees. After seeing her movements, Suimei could no longer think that her actions were reckless. The footholds were poor and she was carrying such a large object, yet she was still so fast as if none of that bothered her. Suimei found it simply beautiful. If she was capable of that kind of dash in these conditions, she would surely not lose in any ordinary circumstance. After a short while, Suimei lost sight of Lefille. The others who had seen her run off were noisily making a fuss in bewilderment and anger, however that only passed for a short amount of time.

“They’re coming!”

A single adventurer raised his voice before the unnatural swaying of the trees and the presence of mana. And then that existence which intended to run them down finally appeared. Was that voice yelled out of surprise or fear...? It was a demon. Along with the surprised voice, many of them began appearing from the myriad of trees. They were figures similar to humans, yet held grotesque features dissimilar from them. They had wings of a bat, the winding horns of a goat and a rusted red body. All the different parts mashed together without anything feeling out of place. They were beings with a truly ugly figure. It was practically right out of fantasy. It was the grotesque body of the enemy of the hero right out of the stories... demons.

In general demons were a grade above other aggressive creatures such as monsters. They were regarded as the natural enemy of humanity, known as an evil existence among all races of the world. According to the stories they were existences close to the devil. Among all the myths in the world this was their attributed origin, though the definition of their existence was very vague in all of them as well. The fact that they had always retained the same limbs as a human and were able to speak the human language was written in every story.

(...Back home we had apparitions, but seeing this kind of thing is indeed a first for me.)

Back in his own world Suimei had fought against inhuman existences before. But to face something that seemed to jump right out of fiction was

unexpectedly a first for him. In his own world even the ancient dragon looked nothing like the way fiction described it and vampires looked far more human than the thing before him. Who would have thought that in this fantasy world, before he had a chance to meet demi-humans and monsters, he would have an encounter with such a being... However the real problem was why the demons were in this kind of place.

(From what that bar-code baldy had said, the demons had not made any big movements after assaulting that country to the north...)

It was a difficult story to swallow. The demons were supposed to be in the northern country of Noshias which they had obliterated. There were still two countries and a mountain range between here and there. It was extremely unnatural for them to appear here. However his opponents were not human, applying human logic to their actions was unreasonable. Setting that aside, for Suimei there was no point in thinking more about such things.

Suimei narrowed his eyes and let out his blood-thirst. One of the demons approaching them had noticed and decided to mark Suimei as its target. The demon headed towards Suimei prepared to strike at him. The demon was artlessly gathering the power of mana in a fiendish shape in the palm of its hand. It shot its arm out towards Suimei and fired out the lump of power at the speed of an arrow.

(I won't be that easily—)

Suimei dodged as the attack whistled passed him. The mana blew away a hole in the ground and kicked up a cloud of dust in the air. Suimei was unharmed. A projectile moving at the speed of an arrow was far too slow for the eyes of a magician. As if to chase after the attack, the demon flapped its wings and dived towards Suimei.

From the heavens to the earth, following a diagonal line straight towards Suimei the demon came rushing in. Following this, Suimei also lunged towards the demon to meet him. This was against all expectations the demon held. If he had dodged backwards or to the sides, the demon would be able to adjust itself to an extent. However if he lunged at it, the demon would have to hit the brakes to adjust its swing.

“Shaa—”

As their paths crossed, along with a yell the demon's black claws swung down towards Suimei. There was no opening, since his target had suddenly moved the demon was unable to properly correct its posture to make a decent attack. This was Suimei's aim, using the gentle arc of those claws and his left foot as a pivot Suimei rotated his body. Grasping the demon's extended arm and giving it a light twist as he span—

“Fuu—”

Suimei let out the air in his lungs and threw the demon. Carrying all the speed it had charged at Suimei with, the demon vigorously drilled into the ground as it was thrown. However it did not seem to take much damage from this. After rolling across the ground a bit, it corrected its posture and took back to the skies. While flapping its bat wings, it maintained a distance from Suimei and stared him down. It was quite irritated. It was not been injured, yet letting out a sharp atmosphere the demon began speaking in a hoarse voice.

“Damn human, using such strange techniques...”

“Calling it strange is mean. It's a properly normal technique.”

Standing at the ready for another attack, Suimei let out a little provocation. The demon snorted back at him. It then shut its mouth and the blood-thirst it aimed at Suimei began to swell.

“Fuu...”

As the grotesque pressure pushed down on him, Suimei returned an interested yet cold gaze at the demon. The demon was wriggling its claws like the mouth of an insect and left Suimei with an unpleasant feeling. It seemed that was the extent to which the demon would participate in conversation... Though it seemed to have no intention to talk, the demon also did not immediately attack Suimei. It seemed to be analyzing Suimei's movements after being thrown so splendidly.

(Just watching...? In that case.)

While the demon was observing him, Suimei took a quick survey of his surroundings. The merchants were hiding themselves and he could not see

them. The other adventurers and mercenaries were also out of sight, but he could sense mana swelling in the distance and hear the roars of battle from the front of the trade corps. It seems that the rest of the demons were focused on where all the humans were gathered. He could also sense a lot of mana deeper into the forest. In other words Lefille's preemptive attack may in fact have bore fruit. It seemed that she had hit a bulls-eye with her actions. While thinking of all this Suimei thrust his hand into his pocket. Seeing this, the demon suddenly flapped its wings. It was about time to for it to move.

“Die...”

“Don't wanna.”

Suimei snapped his fingers, along with the sound of the snap, the ground in front of the demon who was charging at Suimei low to the ground had exploded.

“Nu—!?”

The demon let out a voice as it was caught off guard. This was a smokescreen. The sudden attack magic brought the demon to a complete stop on the spot as it remained floating right above the ground. Suimei took a leap backwards to create some distance. And then after taking a breath, began his magic.

“... Now then, I wonder just how powerful the enemy of the people of this world really is.”

Letting off a small murmur, Suimei manifested the requisite amount of mana for his spell. He kneaded together his spell quickly as magic circles began to appear in the surroundings. Numbers and the words to support them were drawn on the circles, and Suimei called out to activate the effect they described. This was one of the Kabbalah's most important practical spells, numerology.

“—Flamma est lego vis Wizard...” (Assemble flames. Like the cry of the magician's resentment...)

A roaring flame came pouring out from the magic circles which were hanging in the air. And then as if they were being sucked into a single point, the flames poured onto the demon. This was fire magic. However for some reason the

demon did not even move and seemed intent on catching the flames with its entire body.

(Heeeh...)

Suimei was not expecting the demon to take neither evasive or defensive actions. Was it because it was simply stupid? Or perhaps it had some sort of defence? While Suimei was pondering about the demon's choice, the flames engulfed the demon. Seeing that the demon showed no signs of crumbling, Suimei knit his brows. These were magic flames. Upon contact they were meant to burn the enemy to ashes... However the shadow within the pillar of flames showed no signs of struggling or even pain. Before long, some strange power blew the flames away.

“... You're severely underestimating me if you think this level of magic could possibly defeat me.”

Was it because it lacked power that it was unable to burn it to ashes? Looking closely, Suimei could see that not even a hair on the demon was burned. He was not being particularly stingy with his mana or choice of spell, yet this was still the outcome.

(... Fu... With that level of mana, it shouldn't be able to resist magic of that level. Yet it also doesn't seem to be because its body or skin is sturdy either...)

Suimei had intended to end the fight with that single strike. Be that as it may be, he may have been too optimistic. From its mana capacity he could guess that it would be able to resist to an extent, yet it was outside his expectations that it would be completely ineffective...

Seeing that the spell itself was completely extinguished, it did not seem that the demon itself held a high resistance to magic. From what he could feel when he threw the demon, Suimei could sense that the sturdiness of its skin and body were roughly the same as any other living creature. It was possible that it was the type that was naturally strong against fire. However even in that case not having even a single singed hair would be impossible. The magically created flame was different from a fire brought by natural phenomenon.

This ignition magic was not like a simple combustion which burned as long as there was oxygen in the air. The manifested mystery would forcefully cause the

phenomenon of combustion on its target, simply by coming into contact with the fire the target would burn just as dictated by the spell. That's why unless the target had a strong resistance against the spell itself, it should have crumbled before the fire. If it was only a regular flame it would be a different story, but Suimei's fire was magic. This was why he was stumped at the fact that his magic flame did not burn down his target. He could not spot the reason why the demon could resist it, and left him baffled.

“In that case, is it because magic doesn't work externally...?”

As Suimei murmured to himself, the demon once more gathered power into its hand. It stuck out its arm, this time it fired off the lump of power without making any sort of motion. It seemed intent on keeping this as a long distance fight. Suimei evaded the projectile by jumping to the side while leaving a safe margin for error, and the demon once more gathered power into its hand. It then began firing down arrows randomly, it was just like an archer with a bucket of arrows frantically firing down at a target.

Suimei began running and taking evasive action while paying attention to the wagons behind him. The next shot from the demon was a much larger mass of power than before. As it headed towards Suimei, it reduced the trees in its path to simple wood shavings. However at this size Suimei could still easily evade it and took a large jump backwards. An instant afterwards, a cloud of dust blew against Suimei's body. While shielding his face with his hands with a scowl, Suimei heard an explosion to his side.

Another demon entered Suimei's field of vision and it was being assaulted by someone else's magic. The other demon burst as it was struck by magic. It was fire magic. However unlike when Suimei used fire magic, the demon struck by the magic burned and swiftly died.

“That's...”

Just what was happening? Seeing that the flame was effective, the theory that the demons held a natural resistance to fire vanished. While Suimei was deep in thought, a man's voice called out to him.

“Oi! What are you doing! Fall back!”

“Hm?”

“You with the black hair! Fall back!”

The adventurers who defeated the demon were running towards Suimei. At a closer look, it was the party of adventurers who were pleasantly chatting with Lefille earlier. As the warrior-like man was shouting at him, one of the girls behind him that Suimei assumed was a mage, was chanting with her staff held forwards and fired out fire from its tip. As the demon saw the fire, it flapped its wings with a thud and took evasive action.

(So it will dodge that...?)

It was a retreat with plenty of margin for safety. Suimei was bewildered as to why that magic had caused the demon to evade to such an extent. The adventures running towards Suimei finally reached him.

“Fall back. Leave the rest to us.”

“No, I’m fine. I’ll manage on my own.”

“You’ll manage... What the hell are you saying!? You were being pressed back weren’t you!?”

“Pressed back? No I wasn’t really...”

“Weren’t you!? That demon is still perfectly lively!”

The adventurer did have a point. However to Suimei the fight was simply taking a bit of time, he still didn’t feel he was in any sort of danger. Suimei had also not been putting all of his power into the fight. It wasn’t like he had lost interest in defeating the demon. However looking at it from the outside, it was a fact that he had yet to defeat or harm it.

“... That may be so, but I would like you to leave it to me for now.”

“Rejected. Retreat back to the trade corps. We will manage it from here.”

“Eeeeh... No no, that’ll be a problem!”

Suimei was frantically protesting against the adventurer who was shaking his head at him. It was a problem for him. If he just left this to others, he wouldn’t be able to solve the mystery of why his magic did not work. If it was defeated he would still not know the correct amount of mana and how much he would have to hold back to optimally defeat the demons. It was something he should

figure out while he had the leeway to like in the current situation.

“Ha? What the hell problem are you talking about? I said we’ll defeat it, there’s no more to this right? Just quietly go back to where the merchants—!?”

The adventurer had gotten tired of Suimei’s insistence and began rebuking him, but was suddenly interrupted. Suimei evaded the incoming shadow with the minimal required movement. It was another attack from the demon. The man next to Suimei did not fully grasp the attack and had leaped back a great distance to evade it.

“—□□□□□□!”

The demon let out a roar towards the heavens. It was a jarring voice, no, just a sound. It was as if malice itself was transformed into a sound. This repulsive sound assaulted Suimei’s ears. At the same time, the demon’s power began to swell. It was likely drawing out the remaining power it held inside its body. Before long, power began pouring out of the demon’s body in the form of a black haze.

(What is that? Mana? No, that’s...)

As Suimei was gripped by a sense of déjà vu from the power pouring out of the demon, the adventurer loudly raised his voice.

“T-this is bad! Everyone, we need to defeat the demon quickly!”

As Suimei was frowning to himself, the adventurer began to panic. His companions all gave him an answer and nodded altogether. They all charged towards the demon. However the overflowing black power in the demon’s surroundings sent them all flying back as they drew near.

“Shit! We can’t get close!”

“Magic! Throw all your magic at it!”

“—Oh Flame! You will become the spearhead which pierces my enemy...”

At the adventurer’s command, all those in his party that could use magic began chanting at once and fired off their magic. A flood of fire, lightning and wind rushed towards the demon. However as the destruction cleared up like a veil, as if it was perfectly natural, the demon’s figure was still there without a

single scratch.

“No way, for magic to be ineffective...!”

The adventures were beginning to lose their composure as they saw the unharmed figure of the demon. Even so the demon continued to pour out power. Suimei could sense it had a powerful and yet repulsive talent. The power it was letting out was similar yet different from when a magician ignited its own mana furnace. To Suimei this power was not something he had seen before, but...

(... It's getting bad. If I leave it be it'll be dangerous for the others.)

He was interested. However now was not the time to dwell in his own thoughts. If the demon continued to build up power and attack, it was certain that the adventurers would suffer serious injuries. So before that could happen, Suimei began his chant.

“—Flamma est lego vis Wizard” (Assemble flames. Like the cry of the magician's resentment)

Seeing Suimei's chant, the demon yelled at him with intense hostility.

“Ha! Didn't I say that magic from a pest like you could not possibly harm me!?”

“—Is that so? Certainly that may have been the case when I held back my magic. If I properly pour my power into it I wonder if that'll still happen.”

“You think a flame which only gives out that much heat could possibly burn me!?”

“You said it you devil-look-alike! Don't underestimate... A magicians flames!”

As Suimei made this declaration, he continued his chant.

“Hex agon Aestua Sursum. Impedimentum Mors!” (Give form to the agony of death and burst into flames, bestow the one who obstructs me with a dreadful destiny!)

With these words, flames began to pour out from the many magic circles in the air. They were pouring down from the skies and bursting forth from the ground. All the flames gathered together. However instead of crashing into the

demon, this time they wrapped around its body. With the demon as its centre the flames twirled like a whirlpool and burned everything in its vicinity, instantly reducing all of it to ash.

“—Gu, What!? C-compared to before...”

The light of the fires as it reflected off of the ground dyed the world in vermilion and shined through the trees leaving a breath taking scenery. And then in Suimei’s hand, wrapped by a small magic circle, was a magic gem burned in orange. And along with his final keyword, he crushed it in his hand.

“—Flamma! Ashurbanipal!” (Then shine! Ashurbanipal’s revolving stone!)

In an instant, the flames that had been coiling around the demon engulfed it, and drowned out all sound. Their entire field of vision had been filled by with fire. The ground erupted, the sky was dyed red and accompanying all of that was an enormous explosion. This was deflagration magic. The surging crimson haze transformed into great power and exploded. Before the sudden surge of power the demon was not even able to cry out in agony as it died. All the others in the vicinity could only do their best to protect themselves from the intense heat being emitted from the explosion.

And then, all that remained was the smell of soot and the smouldering form of trees which ceased burning. Suimei had adjusted the power so that it would not deeply affect the surroundings, but even so the immense shockwave from the flames that blew away the demon transformed the ground below it into magma. The adventurers all had shocked faces as they beheld this scene, and one of them spoke.

“T-that was amazing magic!”



This demon was the subordinate of the main reason Suimei had been called over to this world. He had intended to keep it company until he had a full grasp of its abilities, however in the end he had to pay mind to those around him and overwhelmed it with sheer force of magic. The demon was not difficult for Suimei to defeat. It did take some time for him to defeat it, however that was all. He did not seriously put his all into the fight after all.

“... Even using Ashurbanipal’s flame it took nearly a minute to completely burn it to ash...”

The magic which Suimei used to defeat the demon was fire magic. Among the five elements, this was the one Suimei specialized in the most. He had good aptitude for the spell and it contained plenty of power. Compared to other magics of similar strength, the chant was also fairly short. However even though he had used this magic, the demon still took nearly a minute to be completely

reduced to ash. It was far too long. Normally it would only take a couple seconds to reduce anything to ash. In spite of that, a simple small fry took that long. Suimei could not accept this kind of conclusion as one who walked the path of magic. While Suimei was making a displeased face with a raised eyebrow, behind him, something came flying in at a terrifying speed.

“Wha—!?”

Suimei turned around to the crashing sounds behind him. What he saw was multiple silhouettes of the body that he had just faced off against. What flew in were demons, well not quite. It wasn't quite demons, it was a lumped mess of demons. There were two or three bodies with bent arms and torn legs and necks. They were all bundled together after having been struck fiercely by something.

(Wha—)

Suimei focused his eyes at the surprising scene. They were indeed the bodies of demons, and along their flight path was the figure of Lefille carrying her massive sword in a single hand. The red and silver tip of her sword peeked through the trees. Her figure did not give off a single hint of the gentle atmosphere she held when Suimei had met her. She was walking with her head lightly hung down and leaning forwards. One of her eyes was shining with a red light. She held her sword in one hand as if drawing a bow. She was carrying the aura of a fierce god as her fighting spirit caused her silhouette to shake.

The sound of someone swallowing rung through the air as if it was much louder than it was. As if this was some sort of starting signal, a demon who had still not died lunged out of the mass of corpses towards Lefille. However the charging demon was intercepted by Lefille's sword with a horizontal slash. It was a clean swing where the tip of her blade did not waver from start to end. With a force strong enough to create a tornado, she split the demon clean in two. Right after the terrifyingly fast slash, she swung her sword once more from overhead. The crucifix she drew in the air blew up like a cross shaped wind from her brilliant sword, and once more the demon split clean into to more pieces.

There was no way the demon was still alive, however she did not stop. Any more was needless. She was only carving up a corpse with her slashes.

Completely ignoring the fact that it was overkill, right until the end, as if Lefille had not had enough, she swung the tip of her massive sword into the demon's head and crushed it.

“Crumble to pieces... scum.”

Lefille had muttered these words, what Suimei could sense from them was an overflowing sense of resentment. As the overwhelming pressure flooding the area faded, Lefille placed her sword upon her shoulder and approached the group.

“...It seems you're finished here as well.”

“W-well, yeah...”

As she casually made this remark, the warrior from the party of adventurers who was acquainted with Lefille gave her a reply. Things had quieted down significantly, however perhaps because of the ghastly sight he had just witnessed, his voice was quiet and stiff. In his stead, Suimei spoke to Lefille.

“How about you?”

“Yeah, with the ones just now I've finished cleaning up to the last. There are no more demons deeper into the forest that way.”

“Weren't there more of them that way compared to here?”

“That's right. I went that way with the intention of taking all of those things on after all.”

“Ha...”

“There weren't any problems right?”

Seeing her make this statement fearlessly, Suimei once more learned how abnormal Lefille was. On top of that not only had she intended to wipe them all out, she was making a face like she was not yet good enough as one had survived just a little longer. He could not tell at all just what she was. Lefille then took a look at the surroundings.

“A short while ago I heard an earth-shattering sound from around here, could it be the cause of this disastrous scene?”

“Yeah, it was my magic.”

Lefille made a surprised face, and then returned Suimei a bright smile.

“As expected of Suimei-kun, you played quite the role.”

“Nothing of the sort. I spent quite a bit of time just defeating one of them.”

“Wha— Just one?”

Lefille sensed an inconsistency between the scale of destruction and the number of defeated enemies. With a surprised expression, she pushed Suimei for an explanation.

“... I intended to stop the extremely powerful ones where I was, but was there one of that calibre here?”

“No, I think it was the same as the others. It was probably the same kind as the one that you just cut up into pieces.”

Suimei glanced over at the lump of dead demons. All of them had the same appearance. He did not think the one he had fought was any different from the others in terms of strength based on looks alone.

“No, but to use magic of such scale against only that level of demon... I believe this magic should be above the intermediate level, am I judging it incorrectly...?”

“Intermediate level?”

“Yeah. Am I wrong?”

Even though Lefille was asking him this, Suimei did not actually know what she meant by intermediate level. Aside from not following the principle of the five elements this world used eight attributes and had some sort of inexplicable division of the levels of magic that Suimei was not fully familiar with. They were split between lower, intermediate and advanced levels. He remembered that when Reiji had learned advanced level magic, everyone around him had celebrated in great joy.

However Suimei did not know what exactly qualified the magic as advanced. Since he couldn't judge his own magic by their standards, he could not give Lefille an appropriate answer. While he was trying to come up with an answer,

the mage girl to his side timidly raised her hand.

“A-about the magic just now, from what I’ve seen from other mages, I think it was not inferior to any magic they could use. But... umm, even though it had such destructive force it seemed like it didn’t affect the demon much.”

“... Is that so?”

“Indeed. Just what was different about my magic?”

Suimei shrugged his shoulders at this conclusion. He did not understand why his magic seemed so incompatible. He was forced to bring things to an end before he could thoroughly experiment on the demon. Honestly speaking he at least had an idea. At the end the demon had unleashed a certain power. Suimei had seen this before somewhere. The instinctively repulsive power which left one’s hairs standing. It was very familiar to the power held by devil worshippers in his own world.

“... Come to think of it, I was told before that the demons were believers of the evil god or something...”

This fact may very well have been the key that Suimei was missing. While Suimei was considering this answer to the mystery, Lefille once more called out to him.

“... Suimei-kun, everyone.”

“Hm? What is it?”

“It seems this was not the last of them.”

As Suimei turned towards the others, the vanguard members of the trade corps had dropped their jaws at Lefille’s statement. As if to reinforce her words, Suimei could suddenly sense the presence of mana approaching them.

“Seriously...?”

Suimei made a stiff expression, and then the mage girl raised her voice.

“I-it’s exactly as Lefille-san said! On top of that there are more than before...”

“Really!?”

“Shit, we have injured people from the fight just now you know? We don’t

have enough forces!”

After hearing the girl’s report, the adventurers and mercenaries were astir. They had been shaken by the prospect of consecutive battles. Though a little late, Suimei sharpened his senses in the direction the demons were coming from. Shutting his eyes and blocking out all unnecessary sensation, he used his sixth sense as a magician.

(There’s, ten... No, twenty of them. Just as she said, there are more than before.)

Just as before, the mana was headed towards them. The power he could sense from them was about the same as before. It was likely that they were the same type of demons. As Suimei was staring off to the west, the other escorts began raising their voices.

“... Tch, what do we do?”

“We can only face them head on! In this situation, we can’t escape!”

“Oi! All you guys who got hurt in the last fight fall back! Everyone who can fight get ready!”

One of the adventurers let out an angry roar as the tension began to rise in the air. The enemy was drawing nearer. Gallio, who was hiding with the other merchants, popped out from behind one of the wagons.

“I-is the fighting still not over...?”

Gallio’s complexion was quite poor. To a civilian like him, demons could only be seen as a symbol of fear. From the flow of the conversation of the adventurers, he must have grasped the gist of the situation. One of the escorts turned to Gallio and responded to him.

“Y-yeah, please wait a little longer. It seems there are still demons coming this way.”

“M-my god... Are we going to be alright!?”

“... That’s, according to them there are more of them headed this way than last time. We also still have injured people who haven’t been treated, it will probably be a tough fight.”

Hearing these words from his escort, Gallio was drowning in the depths of despair.

“W-we were only going to Nelferia to do business, why did demons have to...”

His face was now completely pale. According to his itinerary, the journey would be relatively safe and they would arrive in the Empire with no problem. However now that they had opened the lid they found themselves in the current predicament. As Gallio began moaning, Lefille, who had noticed the second wave first, walked out front and focused her spirit sharply creating a cold atmosphere to reassure Gallio.

“Please do not worry Gallio-dono. Those demons that are headed towards us, I will defeat them to the last.”

“I-if I remember correctly you are Grakis-dono... right? I’m very happy to hear those words, but for a tender young girl like you, demons...”

His next words were likely ‘could not so simply be defeated,’ but his words had trailed off as Gallio became evasive. The girl reflected in his eyes was surely just a little girl who didn’t know her place and was trying to mislead him. The adventurer who had been talking to Suimei during the battle then walked up to Gallio without hesitation.

“No, it’s alright Gallio-san! Lefille is strong! In the fight earlier most of the demons were defeated by her alone!”

“That’s right! On top of that Lefille-san also has the sword skills to split even an ogre clean in two! That’s why it’ll be fine even if they are demons.”

Riding along the warrior-like adventurer’s words, the mage girl chipped in her own opinion. Compared to the other adventurer’s these two were far less anxious. This was surely because they had worked together with Lefille before.

“Is that so...?”

“Yes. That’s why, there’s no need to worry about it.”

Their words were not terribly reassuring, however after peeking at Lefille’s figure, her expression that did not give off a hint of timidity caused Gallio to calm down. Or rather, he now judged the girl who claimed to defeat the

demons on her own was not in any way inferior to the demons. As the two adventurers finished convincing Gallio, he now turned towards Lefille. He still held half of his doubtful atmosphere, however he then cleared his throat and put his appearance back in order to the best that he could.

“... Understood. I have great expectations of your efforts.”

“Yes. I intend to exert myself to match your expectations.”

Lefille returned Gallio’s business like words with modesty. And then, briefly after this exchange had finished, Lefille once more turned towards Suimei.

“Suimei-kun.”

“Hm? What is it?”

“We’ll be going back to our previous conversation, but will you be alright? If something had happened in the previous fight then there is no need to push yourself. It would be better to fall back.”

The root of her suggestion was out of concern because Suimei’s magic had not been effective. For Suimei, as a magician, the safe choice would be to leave it to the Lefille and the other adventurers. However there were many enemies, on top of that it was not definite that they could bring it to an end. In this situation he could not possibly just stand by and watch. The adventurer next to Lefille piled on to her inquiry.

“That’s right. Will you really be alright? You just used some seriously powerful magic too, are you not tired?”

“Yeah. I’m alright, I still have plenty in me.”

“Plenty huh... If you overestimate the distribution of your power it’ll become something you can’t recover from you know?”

“I will gratefully accept your warning.”

Suimei gave a blunt albeit politely worded reply. He wasn’t about to flare up and start a scene from their words said out of concern for his safety. The adventurer was not fully convinced and was still looking at Suimei with suspicion as Lefille continued the conversation.

“But Suimei-kun. Is it alright that your magic is not very effective against the

demons?”

“Yeah, I’ll somehow manage on that front as well.”

“Can you do it?”

“I have much more magic than what I used just now. If the system of magic I used did not work, I just need to keep testing systems until I find one that does.”

“...? An effective system...? Not an attribute?”

“Aaah that’s right... Well in short I have much more up my sleeve.”

Lefille tilted her head to the side in confusion. A question mark was surely hanging above her head, but there was no time for Suimei to clear everything up for her and simply gave her a vague reply. It was a fact that the type of magic Suimei had used was poorly matched against the demon. However that was not a fatal flaw to him. Magic from his world was classified into different magic schools as systems. This was evidence that the origin of magic in that world was not such a simple thing. The peak of magic defined by this fantasy world and the magicians of his world surely differed. In that world where science had spread all over the world, there was a dreadfully uncountable number of mysteries.

Kabbalah, star divination and sorcery. Other more famous ones were alchemy and the spells used by those called witches, witchcraft. The group magic systems of Occultist Taoism, the violent branch of Esoteric Buddhism and the largest system of magic on the continent, wizardry. Just from the ones that Suimei had confirmed himself, there were over thirty systems. Even within these, they could still be broken into attributes, sequences and effects which led to a staggering number of magics.

Certainly there were many magics that Suimei could not understand. Setting aside the ones he could and could not use, there was definitely magic among them that would have an effect against demons. According to his hypothesis, exorcism and holy magic were examples that may work. Even so just because his magic was ineffective against demons was not all the unfavourable to Suimei. Even if he exhausted all the magic systems he knew without finding an effective magic, he could simply push through with sheer

force as he did before.

Regardless of whether there was ten or twenty of the coming, he would just have to shoot off his magic that many more times. That's all there was to it. Suimei's actual problem lied more with the fact that the possibility of him having to display his full powers in this place may actually come to fruition.

(If it becomes necessary I'll have to ignite my mana furnace. Before that I should try everything I can.)

In the case of a crisis, he would let out his full power despite his desire to experiment. He would surely regret it if his stinginess drove the current predicament further into the corner. He would not be responsible for such a foolish outcome.

"It was the same as before, but you sure are calm Suimei-kun. In this kind of situation it would be normal to act the same way as the other escorts."

"Can't you say the same about those two?"

"You're different from them. Unlike them you don't seem to have a single hint of anxiety."

"Is that so? I could just be putting up a strong front you know?"

"You sure can say that shamelessly."

Lefille saw straight through his little lie. Suimei then replied more seriously.

"... Well, even if I lose my composure it won't help any."

As Suimei shrugged his shoulders Lefille let out an exasperated expression. However it was a pleasant breather in the tense situation.

"You're quite an unusual person. You go along with almost any conversation but never show your crucial hand."

"That's just the kind of person I am. I'm a mage after all."

"If you keep acting like that I'll just want to tear off your mask even more you know?"

"Heeh, how will you do that?"

"Fu, I've always only had my sword..."

“Oof! Uwa... Lefille-san is scary.”

Suimei started trembling in an exaggerated manner as Lefille smiled at him with a broad grin. As if there was nothing to worry about, the two were just joking around.

“... Grakis-dono. Do you not need to make preparations like the others are doing?”

“Yeah, I have this after all. As long as I have this single sword, I’m always ready.”

“... Understood. Then, be careful.”

Gallio returned Lefille’s carefree reply with a serious expression. He had been a bit of a mess before, but he was still the leader of this caravan. He was a merchant who travelled from city to city after all, he was at least levelheaded.

“— Now then, it’s about time.”

“Seems so.”

Suimei abruptly made this vague statement, yet Lefille immediately agreed without any hesitation.

“...?”

Gallio was not quite sure what this interchange between the two of them meant and cocked his head to the side. Then the mage girl at the front suddenly yelled out.

“Everyone! They’re almost here!”

Thanks to the wind and other factors, the trees began rustling. Matching this, the tension in the air rose. It was like the atmosphere right before the outbreak of a war. One of the adventurers yelled at Gallio who was still milling about in confusion.

“Oi, Gallio-san! Fall back already! The fighting’s about to start!”

“Y-yes! Then I will leave the rest to all of you!”

After replying in a flustered manner to the adventurer’s vigorous instructions, Gallio ran off to the back. As the escorts all finished their preparations and took

their positions, the demons gathered up in the sky and all rushed down towards them as one from the front. Matching this, the presence of mana swelled in the air directly above them. Several of the escorts noticed and looked to the skies.

“They’re also straight above us!”

The mage’s voice echoed in the air. The demons were making a perfectly timed surprised attack from above them. Seeing the simultaneous attack from two fronts as a bad situation, Suimei prepared his magic, but before he could finish...

“In that case...”

Lefille quietly muttered in a cold voice. What followed was an impossible phenomenon.

“Wha—!?”

All of a sudden Lefille was surrounded by a glittering red light. It was just like an aura pouring out of her body. The darkness was opened by the brilliant light as she was filled to the brim in deep crimson. An immense power was swelling up in her which was not mana. It enveloped her body, sword and the atmosphere around her.

“—HA!!”

She cut the sky as if mowing it down. There was no way she could reach the enemy with the length of her sword. It was a shoddy strike which cut nothing but the air. However the slash emitted a brilliant red arc across the sky which cut across towards the demons above them. Lefille began continuously moving her sword. As each slash finished she calmly flowed into the next. A squall of slashes was born in the air and poured towards the incoming demons in the sky and cut them down. The demons had not been expecting the slashes at all and fell one after the other. Just as they were unable to escape the wind, they could not escape the ominous storm of slashes assaulting them. In a single breath they had all been reduced to corpses.

“Wha...?”

Suimei leaked out a surprised voice. It all happened in the blink of an eye. It was simply a one sided and overwhelming development. The realization of such

an unexpected event was without a doubt the red light.

“Oi wait a sec, that’s...!”

As Suimei suddenly grasped what the source of the red light may have been, he was at a loss for words. His conjecture was just simply impossible. In a completely different sense than Suimei’s surprise, the adventurer and mage who had been watching Lefille without being able to follow her movements yelled joyously in surprise.

“Amazing!”

“Oi did you see that!? That’s the same as when Lefille cut that Ogre clean in two right!?”

“... The same? Lefille has done the same thing before?”

“Ah? Yeah, that’s right... something up?”

The adventurer knit his brows at Suimei’s question. This was probably because he thought Suimei was inappropriately far too surprised at this turn of events when it was supposed to be a happy occasion. When she had defeated that giant, it had also been by using this power. With this fact everything made sense to Suimei. If she used that power most any enemy would be simply defeated just like the demons just had.

“... Um, is something wrong? Are you feeling ill?”

“N-no. That’s not exactly it but...”

Suimei was simply too shocked and his body and thoughts were just not functioning properly. The warrior-like adventurer glanced behind him and yelled out commands as he suddenly remembered they were in the middle of a battle.

“Oops, we can’t just sit on our asses here! We’re also going to cover her!”

“Got it!”

His party along with the other adventurers and mercenaries all yelled in unison. During this, Lefille was still clad in her red light and cutting down the demons. Unlike everybody else who was in high spirits, Suimei was still standing stock still in place. It was as if he was not moving at all, or rather could not

move at all. He was simply entranced by what was happening before his eyes. The reason for this was the right light draped around that girl.

It was very likely that in the other world, the power that she manifested would be called the power of the spirits. It was a completely separate power from mana or ether. Its source was from beings known as angels, devils and other such spirits. It was a power that easily surpassed what a human was capable of and categorized as a high order power.

The term high order was not applied for it simply due to sheer destructive potential. Roughly speaking, it was a power that existed on an entirely different plane from physical and magical strength. It was a simply unfathomable power. It was a ridiculous power that could interfere with anything in existence.

(Did she transform into a spirit? But Lefille is human... No wait, if it isn't that, was her body and soul part spirit to begin with—?)

In her current state, Lefille was not borrowing the power of spirits. No matter how he looked at it, Lefille herself was manifesting the power of a spirit. This was the reason Suimei was unable to compose himself. According to magical knowledge from his world, it was absolutely impossible for a spirit to manifest in the physical world. In that world, they had existed for a long time. However in the current times, the beings classified as spirits such as angels, devils, god or even evil gods had their foundation for existence stolen away by the rapid development of science. In ancient times simply by having a name attached to them they would come into existence. They existed on another plane and possessed just that sort of power. In the rare case where they did not have a name, they were rulers or gods of those planes.

To harness their power, one would have to wield a special technique to communicate with these spirits and form a contract. After doing so they would be able to manifest a small portion of that power. Thus the power before Suimei's eyes where one girl was unleashing such a power without any sort of restriction from her own body was such an utter shock for him. If he were to make a conjecture about her existence, to firmly root her human form in this plane she would have to be half human and half spirit, it was quite the unusual case. Even though he understood it was a simply illogical guess, he still couldn't help but believe it was the case. To think such a ridiculous being could just

quietly exist in this world, it truly was fantasy after all.

“No matter how you look at it being a spirit is too much a cheat...”

Suimei finally managed to shake off his astonishment and was now just half exasperated. The situation before him was just that unusual.

“Is that all!?”

As she blew away most of the demons, Lefille howled at them. She was draining away the will to attack them from the demons all at once. The remaining demons were assaulted by her thunderous voice and the deadly squall. The demons began to show signs of hesitation in their attack.

“Alright! Follow after Lefille! Keep up the pace and defeat them!”

At the adventurer’s orders, all the escorts let out a war cry. They were in a superior position. It could be said that victory was a simple inevitability. After cutting down the ones before them, they would be free from the fighting. Everyone among them was thinking about this. But then...

“W-wait! Something is coming! With terrifying force!”

Someone had sensed the movement of mana in the distance and yelled in a fluster. The mage girl then raised her voice to grab everyone’s attention.

“W-what is this!? Everyone please be careful! An enormous presence of mana is flying this way!”

A violent sound resonated from behind the demons. It was as if a heavyweight was plowing through with all their might letting off sounds of destruction along its path as it drew nearer and nearer. Even to Suimei, it was a dangerous presence. The amount of mana was incomparable to all the other demons up until now.

(Tch, give me a break. It was looking like it was going to end quietly too...)

Suimei cursed to himself in his mind with a bitter face as the extremely dangerous presence drew closer. Lefille turned back to the other escorts.

“Everyone fall back! It will be here soon!”

Right as she yelled, the dangerous presence that had squashed their hopes of

an inevitable victory mowed down the trees along its path and arrived before them. Letting out a thunderous roar and shaking the earth, a demon settled in front of their eyes as it struck the ground. With its fist in the ground, it then stood up straight in a perfectly relaxed manner. Its stature exceeded that of the other demons and was a little over two metres. Its legs and arms were like logs. It was simple to describe it as simply an incarnation of violence. It gave off a majestic appearance which suggested that strength meant everything. Its combat prowess could be felt in the atmosphere. A presence that would stir fear in anyone's heart, truly a demon. Its general silhouette was similar to a human, however none of the details on its body were in any way human.

“... Fuu, finally found it.”



The demon who suddenly appeared spoke these words. Just what had he found? With just those words Suimei could not grasp their meaning. Completely

overawed by the sudden appearance of such an overpowering presence, the escorts began to panic.

“W-what... is that? It’s much bigger than the others...”

“S-such dreadful power! It cannot even be compared to the other demons...”

They were all prepared to flee on the spot. It couldn’t be helped. The oppressive pressure pouring out of this demon was like a poison to humans.

(Oioi this seriously can’t be compared at all to the ones up until now...)

Before its pressure, sweat also began forming along Suimei’s brow. Despite having yet to grasp the actual strength of the demons in general, suddenly a much stronger and higher ranked version had appeared before him. The demon was standing there like a tiger glaring at the prey before him.

“However, it’s different from what I heard. It couldn’t be we grasped onto fake information...?”

Something didn’t match the demon’s expectations. A small amount of bewilderment was mixed into its voice. After a short while it spat on the ground in irritation, pulled itself together and took in a deep breath.

“Whatever. It doesn’t change anything. —Hear me, humans! My name is Rajas! One of seven who was entrusted by the demons’ glorious leader Lord Nakshatra with an army! Now that you have seen me here there is no longer a path before you where you live! You can just quietly stand there and get killed by me!”

His voice shook the earth and the air like a shockwave. The escorts who were already trembling in fear were driven even further into the depths of despair.

“A-ahh...”

Someone’s terrified voice could be heard quietly in the air. All the humans had gotten pale, inside they must have all been mirroring that voice. This situation had become just that hopeless.

“...”

Lefille, who was standing nearest to Rajas had not moved a muscle. She was just hanging her head as if she was enduring something while gripped her

enormous sword firmly in both her hands. Something was wrong with her, could the pressure of the demon also be affecting her? The girl who was at her limit had been taking the lead in the fighting and was now the centre of all the escorts anxious gazes. And as she reached her limit, Lefille's emotions violently burst out.

"You... BASTAAAAAAAAAAAAARD!!"

She let out a roar that was in no way inferior to Rajas'. It was a shout filled to the brim with anger. She blew away the pressure that had been overwhelming the atmosphere, and slashed at the demon before her with her red light.

"Hou?"

As the red whirlwind approached him, Rajas let out a fearless smile and stuck out his arm. The red sword slashes intersected with his arm, however it was unable to cut through. A black aura wrapped around his arm and clashed with Lefille's power causing a violent white light to pour out as fire spread into their surroundings. The strike had been completely stopped by the power around his arm and did not reach Rajas at all. It was an excellent strike with all of Lefille's strength poured in behind it, yet the demon had fended it off. Rajas gave a smirk in admiration as if laughing at her.

"You're quite good, little girl."

"Of course! Did you forget my sword!?"

"Hou? You're sword you say?"

"—B-bastard! Are you... Are you saying you don't remember me!?"

Lefille was pouring out her intense rage. From what she had said, Suimei could infer that she and the demon Rajas were deeply connected in some way. As the demon began to stir, Lefille jumped back. Safely landing on the ground as she corrected her stance. As she did this, the demon squinted at her while scrutinizing every detail about her. Just as Lefille had suggested, it seems that he had remembered the connection between them and let out a loud laugh.

"—Aaah, FUHAHAHA! I see! I remember now little girl! You're that damn survivor from that time in Noshias right!?"

“That’s right! You finally remembered!”

“HAHAHA! I was sure you would die on the side of the road, but to think you survived! Even though everyone else died!”

“BASTAAAAAARD!!”

As Rajas gave off another joyous smile, Lefille once more began her assault. She had become completely drowned in anger and forgotten herself completely. Perhaps it was because of this, but her sword strikes contained power that could not even be compared to her previous strikes. But the demon was also quite capable. His arms wrapped in a black aura intercepted Lefille’s fierce barrage of slashes. Lefille who had completely lost herself left an opening, and after spotting this, Rajas began to move. Within the small opening created by repelling her sword, a fist came barrelling down on Lefille.

“—Your movements are too monotonous!”

“ah—”

Captivated by the the fist before her, Lefille unconsciously leaked out her voice and stopped moving. It was bad. She had seen the aura pouring out of that arm fend off her attacks. If she was struck by that, even as a spirit she would be in serious danger.

“Tch—”

All the others were completely frozen in place. In that case the only one who could break her out this situation was Suimei. Clicking his tongue and letting out the bitterness he had been holding in, he used his magic to forcefully pull Lefille’s body that had locked up at the sight of Rajas’ incoming fist.

“Wha—!?”

“Mu—?”

Two surprised voices filled the air. One from the one who was pulled, and the other who had their prey pulled away. A small moment of leisure lingered between the two as the distance between them increased. But the situation was not so sweet that Lefille was actually out of reach of Rajas’ attacks. Thus Suimei had to insert himself between the two to prevent her from receiving

another attack.

“Suimei-kun! You can’t! Get out of there!”

“You damn small fry! You dare stand before me!?”

The warning that sounded out like a scream behind him was drowned out by Rajas’ rage as his voice struck Suimei’s body like a shockwave. While receiving this, Suimei lunged at Rajas at the fastest speed he could muster. As he approached, he focused on Rajas’ movements. His shoulder was moving. He was intending to swat away Suimei with his fist in a single strike. Seeing this fist, Suimei discarded his plan to catch and throw Rajas. Even if he evaded and caught the strike, it would surely turn out poorly for him. Thus he jumped. The fist came down diagonally towards the ground, and Suimei used it as a ramp to run up Rajas’ arm. Having accelerated the whole time, Suimei was already at Rajas’ shoulder by the time his arm was fully extended.

“Fuu...”

Standing on Rajas’ shoulder he let out a stomp. Using all the mana he could gather in that amount of time, he struck with a single kick. The shock of the strike was also felt by Suimei, however Rajas had not suffered any injury.

(Shit, even a direct hit did nothing...)

The kick had left out a thunderous sound and the ground beneath the demon had caved in spectacularly, yet the attack seemed to have no effect. The other demons were harmed by the adventurers’ swords, this difference was truly irritating for Suimei. He was wondering if there was some weird trick going on. Normally this strike would split one in two from the shoulder down, it was a fraud that nothing would happen here. As Suimei fluttered in the air while swearing in his head, an agitated gaze locked onto him.

“You brat!”

Rajas swung his arm wildly. It was not a focused strike, but the attack could still destroy Suimei’s body five times over. He was once again in awe that Lefille traded blows with such strikes with her sword. As expected of a spirit, they were simply amazing.

“—Via Gravitass.” (Gravity Road, Take Form.)

As the attack rushed towards Suimei, he let out two quick words. Using magic, he brought his body that was still in the air crashing into the ground instantly. Rajas managed to follow the movement with his eyes and let out a kick at Suimei.

“—!?”

In the next instant, Suimei was behind Rajas. Suimei had slipped under Rajas' kick, due to the cloud of dust created by the kick it seemed Rajas had not seen him do it. Suimei wouldn't have minded seeing that surprised face, but a loud crashing sound resonated through the air as the trees in front of the demon were uprooted from his kick. Everything in Suimei's field of vision was blown away. He truly wished the demon would stop leaving everything to sheer strength. In that brief instant where Rajas had yet to turn around, Suimei walked backwards. He was taking his distance to observe the demon who was like a storm of violence while strutting confidently.

Suimei focused his vision on the back of the demon before him. It was an immense body. It was a physique far beyond what the most gifted genes of humanity could achieve. He let out a tremendous amount of pressure and his mana could not be put on the same scale as the demons before him. And to eclipse all of that was the pitch black aura. It was coming out of Rajas' body, but it was surely something special. Rajas had finally turned around and met Suimei's gaze, shaking it off like it was inconsequential, Suimei continued strutting to the side.

“Tch—”

An aggravated sound could be heard as Rajas reacted to Suimei toying with him. And following it was a single attack. In that case.

“—Omissa Vicissim.” (Reverse the Logic of Heaven and Earth)

“Wha!?”

Using magic Suimei reversed up and down in the space before him and left his target in the air to fall to the ground. As Rajas was flipped upside down, his head was driven into the ground. Of course no damage had been inflicted, this was meant to buy Suimei some time. Having bought the time to perform his spell, Suimei leaped backwards and began weaving together his magic which he

deemed would be effective.

“—Abreqa... tch!”

However he was forced to stop his chant partway. As if the earth itself was attacking him, an avalanche of rocks blew up from the ground.

“Ha, because of lumps of clay...”

Suimei let out a cold voice that even made himself shudder. He swung his arm wildly at the rocks coming towards him. As the rock came into contact with the magician who wielded the mysteries of the Kabbalah, they split clean in two one after the other. As the earth settled, an oppressive aura filled the air again.

(...It is evil down to the core.)

Suimei concluded that Rajas was just that sort of creature. The power he wielded could only be described as evil. Its presence was enough to make one nauseous, a power that a human would never be able to wield. It was a power from another plane, from someone else. As he came to realize this, he once more stood before Rajas. Suimei his hand in his pocket. Even though Rajas just had a fit of rage from being trifled with, he had a calm expression. It seemed the title of general was not just for show as he at least had the composure to remain calm when necessary. Brushing off the dirt that had gathered on his body, Rajas let out a scornful laugh.

“You’re quite good, kid. Even though you’re a mage you do quite well.”

“Well thanks.”

“But, if you’re only able to put up this much resistance it isn’t much of a fight.”

“Resistance huh? From where I’m standing I think you’ve only been striking air. What do you have to say about that?”

“Fu... Shut up. That’s not something you can say when you can’t muster enough power to even injure me.”

Rajas shot down Suimei’s provocation with a laugh. It seemed the Rajas wasn’t going to get careless from just that. Lefille then regained her posture and stood next to Suimei.

“Suimei-kun! Be careful! His power isn’t only of this level!”

“... No, you’re saying he’s still not serious? Seriously give me a break...”

Suimei let out a deep sigh completely inappropriate to the situation, or rather he had let his thoughts leak out. Seeing that Rajas was still perfectly composed and Lefille had made that sort of declaration, Suimei estimated that it was possible the power being displayed was not even half of what he was capable of.

“If he wanted to then this entire area would be easily...!”

“Oioi, he’s that dangerous?”

“That’s right. The exchange of blows just now was nothing but him playing around. Don’t let your guard down.”

Suimei could see the hands gripping Lefille’s sword straining. She was surely remembering something unpleasant.

“Kukuku, that’s how it is. A mere human mage shouldn’t get so cocky...”

“Tch—”

Rajas’ overwhelming presence suddenly swelled out as Lefille let out a small groan and let anxiety showed on her face. If Rajas’ power was truly much more than this, it would certainly be bad for things to go on. Before it was too late, Suimei had to defeat him. In that case.

“Archiatus Over—” (Mana Furnace, Load—)

Just as Suimei began his chant, the situation turned on its head. Just as he thought Rajas was about to charge at them, he suddenly just began laughing at Lefille.

“Kukukuku...”

“What’s so funny!?”

“No, I just thought of something quite amusing.”

“Amusing, you say?”

Rajas did not give her a reply and instead flew up into the sky.

“I will take my leave, for now.”

“Wha—!?”

“But remember, woman from Noshias. That damn power you hold is not something that we can ignore. I will go and gather all of my subordinates here in this land, and come back to face you.”

“Your, subordinates? Then...”

“They are a single part of my army. No, if you compare it to my entire army there aren’t that many of them, this you should already know.”

Lefille was left speechless as Rajas continued on his own.

“Obviously you shouldn’t expect to be saved you know? My soldiers are spread all throughout this area. Any humans which enter the area are cut down without mercy, to send a message.”

With those words, Rajas turned his back to them and left with the other demons. Lefille ran with all her might to chase after them, but...

“W-wait!”

“Lefille.”

“—!?”

Suimei grabbed her shoulder. It was no use. As she was asking why he had stopped her with her eyes, he simply shook his head. As she finally realized what she had been doing, she let go of the power from her body.

“Are you alright?”

“... Yeah. Sorry... I lost my composure quite a bit there.”

Lefille hung her head in shame as she replied.



Things had calmed down for a moment after the demons had left and Suimei’s next task was waiting before him. This was to use magic to heal those who were injured in the fighting. On paper at least, this was the reason he was part of this trade corps. There happened to be other mages who were able to use healing magic, so the work finished unexpectedly quickly.

“Fuu, that should be it for now.”

Suimei let out a breath as he finished treating the last person. Since he was not a specialist when it came to healing, he was a little worried that his treatment was somewhat lacking but seeing as no complications arose his self-evaluation was a little underrated. Taking a look at those that he treated it also seemed that none of them had any problems with it either.

(It's getting awfully noisy over there.)

A little further away from Suimei, he could hear a loud voice. Obviously the source of it was the other escorts and merchants, but he did not know what they were yelling about. Perhaps it was about what they were going to do from now on. According to Rajas, his subordinates in the area were all beginning to gather. They did not have the time to spend on leisure if they were going to secure a safe route from here on. Surely they would want to leave as soon as possible.

If they were raising a fuss from those preparations it was possible there was some sort of trouble getting in their way. In that case Suimei decided to see for himself and headed towards the directions of the yelling. What greeted him when he arrived was an extremely tense atmosphere. Just what was happening to cause things to escalate so much? Holding these thoughts in his heart as he got closer, he could see the escorts and merchants all surrounding somebody. The one at the centre of all of them was the one who had been bravely fighting just a moment ago, Lefille. Thinking about it normally they should all be thanking her for basically singlehandedly defeating the demons. However judging from the atmosphere in the air they were not surrounding her to shower her in praise. And then, as if she was tired of it all, Lefille spoke.

“... What did you all call me here for, is there something wrong? I believe there are more important things to do than something like this right?”

As she attempted to push everyone away from her with those words and her expression, one of the adventurers stepped forwards.

“Ah? Things to do? Just what are you saying we should be doing?”

“Obviously we should be heading towards a safe location immediately. If we do not hurry the demons will attack us you know?”

“Attack us huh...”

The adventurer’s words were filled with sarcasm, Lefille replied to him in a strong tone.

“What. Do you have something you want to say? If you do just spit it out—”

“Yeah, I do. The reason we were attacked is because you were here, right, miss survivor from Noshias?”

“—!!”

“...Ha... What do you mean by hurry? So shameless. Everything is your damn fault! That we were attacked, and that we are about to be attacked too!”

The adventurer was yelling while attacking Lefille with his words. Compared to before, Lefille’s behaviour became much more timid.

“C-certainly that thing said he was aiming for me, but the fact that we were attacked...”

“Isn’t because of you? Can you really say that?”

“...”

Lefille was not able to respond to the adventurer’s accusation. The demon Rajas had said he was aiming for Lefille, but that was after the fact. The original reason for the demons appearing here was still not clear. Therefore the adventurer’s words could not be taken as outright fact. However she also could not say for certain that he was wrong thus she did not refute him.

“That demon was chasing after you right? He took along his army just to beat you to death.”

“Th-that’s...”

“What? That’s what? If you have something to say just try saying it. If you can that is.”

Lefille was no longer able to say anything back to the adventurer pushing her into a corner and hung her head in silence.

“Can I say something?”

“Ha?”

“Earlier when the demon was fighting Lefille it said ‘I remember now’ right? From that we can infer that the demon only recognized her after the attack itself. If was aiming for her in the first place, he wouldn’t say something like that right?”

“Th-that’s unrelated!”

“Ha? There’s no way it’s unrelated...!”

“He could have just been chasing after some vague information. In that case they wouldn’t necessarily know what she looked like right? Isn’t that right?”

In that case the demon was looking for someone like that in the area and showed up because of that. After the fact they realized Lefille was here. Suimei agreed that this line of reasoning was not impossible.

“Also, before we were attacked, remember what that woman said? She said with certainty that the ones attacking us were demons right? How could she possibly know something like that? It could have easily been monsters.—Yeah, you get it now right? She knew demons were aiming for her right?”

Suimei suddenly recalled this was the adventurer who had come to them to inform them of the attack in the first place. He was certain this adventurer had been dubious of Lefille’s declaration at the time as well.

“That’s just a distorted conclusion. Isn’t it just because she has a special sense for detecting demons?”

“Maybe. However, can you prove that?”

“—That’s...”

It was an extremely selfish and one sided question. Suimei had nothing to say to the adventurer who started to use such sophistry. One’s ability to sense the presence of others was not something that could be proven to others. Even if there was a way to do that, he was already far beyond any reason.

“You can’t right? Then don’t butt in where you don’t fucking belong.”

“Nnn...”

Everything that came out of this man’s mouth was grating on Suimei’s nerves. Suimei was just at his boiling point with those last harsh words. However before

anything could happen, a man parted the crowd and came forward.

“Please wait, both of you.”

“Gallio-san...”

As Suimei turned towards the source of the voice he saw the caravan’s leader, Gallio.

“You’re both here to protect the trade corps, it would be troublesome if there was friction between you. I would like the both of you to bring an end to your quarrel immediately.”

“You say you want to end the quarrel Gallio-san? Then do you got a proper way to end it?”

“Yes. As the one whose duty it is to manage this trade corps, I would like you to leave this to me.”

“Y-yeah...”

As Gallio flatly let out this declaration the adventurer simply nodded obediently and had nothing else to say. It went to show that he had been doing this for a long time despite his looks. Before the pressure let out by Gallio, the adventurer lost all of his spirit. After getting the adventurer’s consent, Gallio briefly glanced around at all the other to confirm with them as well. None of them had any intent of interfering and nodded towards him and all the voices that were yelling at Lefille had stopped. After confirming with all of them, Gallio turned towards Lefille.

“... Grakis-san. I am the one responsible for this trade corps. In other words, I’m in a position where I must put the trade corps’ safety at the highest priority.”

Everyone present knew this already, but he went out of his way to make this declaration.

“Right now, the demons are aiming for us. The cause of this falls on your shoulders. As the one responsible for this trade corps, I cannot leave the current situation as it is. Do you understand?”

“Yes. I understand. You’re saying that I should distance myself from the trade

corps, correct?”

“—!?”

“Yes, that’s correct. It’s a fact that parting with your strength in this situation is regretful, but it is also true that your presence will guarantee that the demons will come back to attack us— there’s no need to say what needs to be done right?”

Gallio had been awfully roundabout with his approach but Lefille had grasped his intent and nodded firmly. As she did the surrounding crowd began yelling in agreement. ‘Obviously!’,

‘Hurry up and get out of here!’, ‘You damn jinx!’, and other ill mannered phrases were being thrown at her. It wasn’t as if Lefille was being aimed for because she wanted to, the malice from the trade corps was simply uncalled for. In the first place she was the one in the most danger and also the one who should be the most distressed. Suimei thought it was just wrong for her to receive this sort of treatment. There was no way he could stay silent about it.

“Are all of you planning on throwing a single girl out on her own in this kind of place!?”

“Of course! The demon said he was aiming for that woman! If we move together with that woman, we’ll come into conflict with that demon general and his subordinates you know!?”

“That may be so! But on her own there is a problem of water and provisions!”

“Like I give a shit! That woman could starve and die for all I care!”

After hearing those words, Suimei quietly looking around at all the others.

“... Do you all share that opinion?”

He already knew their answer, but was compelled to ask anyway. However all he received were cold gazes. Suimei started grinding his teeth, and then the adventurer gazed at him in disdain and bluntly let out some despicable words.

“So? How long are you going to act like a fucking goody two-shoes? Deep down you also think that woman should just get the hell out of here right?”

“What!? I’m not—”

“If you keep pretending to be close to her you’ll lose your chance to get away you know? Or is it that? Did you get tricked by that woman’s sex appeal? Aah that’s right, she is quite the looker right?”

“Wha—”

“Ha, what a horrible woman to attract demons and trick men huh.”

His words were directed at Suimei like he was telling him to bring it on. Suimei was far beyond the boiling point of his anger and the tension in the air rapidly cooled the entire surroundings. His words were simply too vulgar, Suimei’s patience had already snapped. That’s why he lifted his hand ready to snap his fingers at the adventurer, it couldn’t be helped.

“Ah, what? What’s with that hand?”

He was too foolish to understand that briefly his sleazy smile would literally be blown away. Using his attack magic, Suimei would mercilessly get rid of that annoying face. However, before the righteous indignation from Suimei’s anger could take shape, Lefille stopped him.

“—Stop! Suimei-kun! What would you accomplish by doing that!? In the end nothing will change right!?”

“Tch...”

Suimei came back to his senses with Lefille’s words of restraint. Certainly nothing would change no matter what he did at this point. There was no way to overturn the fact that Lefille would have to leave. If he thought about it calmly he already knew this. Weighing the risks and taking into account the safety of the trade corps, having her leave was almost obvious. Suimei clicked his tongue at the frustration of the current situation, then Gallio once more began speaking.

“Grakis-san. I will repeat myself once more. I believe you already understand this but...”

“Yes. I just have to go in a different direction from the trade corps. I understand.”

It was obvious, there was nothing else she could do. It was necessary to

reduce the danger to the trade corps. As the two were making this exchange, Suimei glanced at the party of adventurers who had been on good terms with Lefille. The mage girl that she had chatted to in a friendly manner. The warrior who proudly boasted of her achievements. They had all covered for her in unison during the battle, but now they would only avert their gazes and refuse to protect her in any way.

Suimei couldn't blame them for this though. They were all certainly afraid of an army of demons. They did not know what would happen if they tried to cover for her instead of pretending to be strangers. It could also be simply that they also saw her as the primary culprit for the demons appearing. They were only look out for themselves. However calling that cowardice would be incorrect. It certainly wasn't something Suimei was allowed to say based on his previous decisions. Before long, after their negotiations for provisions had completed, Suimei called out to Lefille.

"Lefille..."

"... We only knew each other for a short while Suimei-kun, but I pray that you are able to reach Nelferia safely."

Even in this situation she was able to put on a smile. Looking at her lonely smile, Suimei could not ask her if she was truly alright with this. She would surely just say 'It's fine,' with no hesitation. She then turned her back to him. The figure of her back as she walked away with her conspicuously large sword did not have a shred of the reliability that she previously held. All Suimei could see was the fleeting figure of a girl her age. That's why...

"Oi, let's go."

Yes, that's why...

"Oi? Are you listening?"

This was different from the time with Reiji and Mizuki. In this situation if he shut his eyes he would simply be abandoning her to her fate. The last thing he would have seen of her was that lonely back. That's why, before Suimei realized, he began speaking.

"... Give me some provisions as well."

“Ha?”

“I’m going with her. I’m much obliged for being allowed to come along with you on the journey up to here.”

The adventurer was make a dumbfounded face at Suimei from the side as Gallio let out an exasperated sigh and replied.

“Is this really alright Yakagi-dono? If you abandon the request partway, naturally you will not be able to receive a reward you know?”

“Don’t need it. I only need water and food. I would like you to hand some over proportional to the work I’ve done up to know.”

“... Understood. Stay safe, Yakagi-dono.”

Gallio replied while keeping his eyes closed. He knew he wasn’t going to be able to stop Suimei and simply accepted their parting here. Or rather if he wasn’t able to calmly come to this sort of conclusion he wouldn’t have been able to do this kind of job for so long.

“Heeeh, so after all—”

As the adventurer was about to say something from Suimei’s side he was blown away with a snap immediately. Suimei had no intention of listening to his vulgar yapping anymore. He then turned towards the adventurers who had gotten along with Lefille with a worried face.

“Oi, you guys, are you okay with this...?”

“Yeah. You two take care as well.”

After exchanging these words, Suimei began cramming provisions into his bag.

“— Suimei was used as bait!?”

After Rofuri went out to perform sentry duties against any Mazoku that might follow, Reiji’s roar erupted in the vicinity that turned quiet.

— No need to worry. Gregory started his long speech with that opening line, stunning Reiji who couldn't believe what he heard, pressing forward as if he was going to grab him by the collar.

He didn't show a shred of respect. This intense expression of the man known as a hero scared Gregory.

“Is that true!?”

“Y-Yes! It is just as I said.”

“Wha...!”

Reiji was too shocked to say anything. This was no joking matter, and must be the truth.

As Reiji bit his lips and was about to grab Gregory by his shirt.

Titania who had been at a loss all this while stepped in to restrain Reiji.

“P-Please calm down, Reiji-sama!”

“B-But!”

“Gregory isn't done yet, please let him finish his story...”

“... Understood.”

Titania had a point. Like she said, Gregory only got to the part about 'Suimeido' would be the bait so there shouldn't be much danger on this end'.

... Seeing Reiji accept her counsel, Titania patted her chest and sighed in relief. Next, Titania who had always been gentle used an unexpectedly stern gaze and voice to command Gregory:

"Gregory, tell us everything with not a single bit of falsehood. Can you do that?"

"... By your will."

Gregory knelt as he answered the princess. Maybe he was intimidated by her piercing gaze as sweat wetted his forehead and he started his tale again.

"... I heard about this when we met our contact person earlier. According to him, the Mazoku sent an army to the borders of Aster in order to kill the hero. They used Suimeido as bait in order to save the hero-do from that army"

At this moment, Reiji whose expression was gloomy started questioning Gregory.

"You mentioned that Suimeido is used as bait, how exactly? Did they ask Suimeido to act as a decoy..."

"No. Suimeido doesn't know about this."

Everyone already expected Gregory to say that, but to pull this off would be rather difficult in reality. Since Suimei was acting as bait without knowing about it himself, a question arises.

“... So how did they make Suimei the bait? Wouldn't Mehter be attacked?”

“Yes, about that, the plan was enacted to match Suimei-dono's departure from Mehter...”

“Match his departure?”

“Hmm? Hmm? W-Why? Suimei-kun never said he wanted to leave the capital?”

Yes, when they left the castle, Suimei only told them he wanted to live outside the castle. Mizuki question was only natural, since it contradicted what happened when they left Mehter.

“A-After we set off from Mehter, there was news about Suimei searching for a caravan escort assignment through the adventurer's guild.”

“Suimei visited the adventurer's guild?”

“Yes. According to intel, Suimei seemed to have become a member of the Twilight Pavilion. From this, it could be speculated that he planned to leave Mehter all along... The nobles who knew about this and is related to the Demon King subjugation campaign used Suimei to...”

So he was exploited. But this led to more questions. What was Suimei trying to do, he turned down the journey with Reiji and company for the sake of safety in the first place. But despite that, he registered in the adventurer's guild and accepted a caravan escort request. He wouldn't have done that if he didn't have a plan.

"Suimei-kun, what happened...? It's dangerous to leave the city, he should know that."

"I don't know. But I think Suimei must have acted after thinking it through."

Seeing that unease was wavering in Mizuki's eyes, Reiji asked Gregory once again:

"Forget it. The reason why Suimei could become the bait is clear. But why did the nobles do that? They didn't need to go out of their way and use Suimei as the decoy."

That's right, with the Mazoku invading with an army and their allies having limited manpower, the only option was to escape. Since running away would be good enough, there wasn't any reason to use Suimei as bait.

"Hero-dono, there is a large Mazoku army heading our way. They might be slow because of their scale, but they are still Mazoku after all. No matter how slow they are marching, the area they can cover is on a different level from the march of a human army. In order to avoid the possibility of the hero being captured, Lord Hardias..."

"So it's Duke Hardias!?"

“Yes...”

Because Titania’s voice was filled with surprise, Gregory lowered his head timidly.

Who is this Duke Hardias, I think I heard his name a long while ago.

Reiji tried searching his memories, but came up empty.

“Sorry Tia, but who is Duke Hardias?”

“... Duke Hardias is one of the handful of grand noble in Aster, he had been appointed by father to plan the defence against the Demon King invasion. However...”

“And the matter of Suimei becoming the bait?”

In response, Titania nodded heavily even though she didn’t have any proof. Gregory who knew the situation said:

“...Yes. Like I explained, This is the decision Duke Hardias and some of the nobles made on their own. And of course, they have no doubts about the power of the hero Reiji, but they judged that it was still too early to face the opposing army directly, even with the help of supporting troops. That’s why they came up with this plan.”

“... But even so, this is not a reason to forcibly make Suimei the bait, isn’t that

right?”

“With regards to that, it still isn’t clear why the Mazoku can sense the existence of the hero. The Mazoku who were captured by Hardias’ men only said they were here to kill the hero, and nothing more, but even so.... Pardon me, but I can’t confirm the reason with you either, maybe Suimei who was also summoned can disrupt the eyes of the enemy more easily... That’s why false information was leaked to the Mazoku, diverting them to target the caravan Suimei-dono was traveling with.”

This method might be effective too. Their group have not engaged the Mazoku army as of now, which was definitely related to them knowing the existence of the hero, but was unable to pinpoint his location.

Assuming that the Mazoku could sense the summoning of the hero through some means, no matter how accurate that method was, there was value in launching a preemptive attack. They only knew the rough position of the hero and they still eagerly march their army that way. This meant they reckon that they had a good chance of defeating the hero.

In that case, a piece of information was necessary. That was the timing of the hero summoning.

“... The truth might have been exposed to the Mazoku when we announced to the whole world about our journey. But from the attacks so far— Is that possible?”

“That’s right, it’s hard to think of it that way. Like Mizuki said, the Mazoku is moving too fast.”

Therefore, someone amongst the Mazoku sensed the hero summoning before the news broke out.

“How did Duke Hardias leak the false information to the Mazoku...? He couldn't have an acquaintance in the Mazoku right? How did he manage that?”

“A-According to the contact person, soldiers were sent to Charlotte as messengers to spread the word to those who didn't know about the Mazoku that the hero was hidden in the caravan heading towards Kurand.”

“What!?”

“I-In that case, could it be...”

Terrible thoughts swirled in her mind as Mizuki's voice started to tremble. She seemed to have grasped the meaning behind Gregory's words accurately. The face of the young girl turned pale with unease. Gregory answered with an expression that was a mix of bitterness and regret to the young girl:

“... If the soldiers who only know the false information were captured, they will be interrogated and spill what their mission was. However, if the soldiers were fed false information from the very start, they will only divulge false information no matter how they much they get interrogated. If the Mazoku fall for it, then the plan would be a success. That's why the proposal passed through in no time...”

“For such a thing to...”

“This is too much...”

This incident shocked the two girls badly. Titania covered her mouth and was dumbstruck, while Mizuki looked as if she was on the verge of tears.

In front of the two girls, Reiji shouted angrily at Gregory:

“... Using human like this... I-Isn't that going overboard!? What do they think lives are!?”

“T-The life of hero-dono cannot be compared to the life of soldiers. If we lose the hero who can save tens of thousands of people for the sake of a dozen or so soldiers, it would not be worth it.”

“Has Suimei been sacrificed because of such logic...!”

“The people in the caravan are also unrelated to this. But...”

Gregory became quiet as he listened to Reiji lose his temper and shout, and Mizuki groan. He must have his own thoughts about using the lives of soldiers in such a way.

Reiji calmed down after venting for a while, and tried his best to calm down and said:

“... Is there no other way?”

“When I learned about this, the Mazoku army was already halfway across the territory of Charlotte, and pressing on to the mountainous region of the border.

It is too late to do anything about it at this point...”

“Since you already knew, why didn’t you say anything!”

“T-This can’t be helped! I was ordered not to reveal this before the time comes, as a knight, I don’t have the authority to ignore this order... And when I knew about it, it was already...”

“T-Then... Suimei-kun is...”

“... He has probably made contact with the Mazoku. According to the misinformation we spread, we only mentioned that Suimei-dono didn’t have any outstanding features, wore strange clothes, and the approximate position of the caravan. There are no guarantees, but if they search the one who matches such conditions...”

“B-But! If he ran off somewhere to hide...”

“That would be difficult. It seems that the claws of the Mazoku even reached the inside of the Neruferian Empire. This means the Mazoku army was really large in scale. Since there already is a specific target zone, I think they will comb the area thoroughly. In that case, the caravan that didn’t know anything will...”

When they heard Gregory’s speculations, everyone had a complicated expression. They were all dumbstruck, probably because of sadness, depression, or both. Both Mizuki and Titania probably felt that Suimei who didn’t possess any power will be safe. Even Reiji was starting to feel this way.

At this moment, Titania spoke again.

“... Our national defence, no, what about the defences for Mehter and Kurand?”

“That’s right... Now that you mention that!”

Titania’s words snapped Reiji back to reality. What happened to Suimei filled his entire head, so he didn’t thought about this part. If the Mazoku was targetting Suimei, that meant the country had been invaded by the Mazoku. There was no reason for them to stop their invasion after taking out the caravan. Thinking logically, that meant the city in the vicinity would be exposed to danger.

“Yes. For the defences of Kurand, the local mecenaries and Mage guild had already started recruiting people who could fight, the adventurer’s guilds are also gathering their elites in secret. As for Mehter, the knights and Mage corps are selecting and gathering trained personnel, and are organizing them into units.”

“If they could deal with it so smoothly, then why did they use Suimei as bait...”

“There isn’t enough time to organize the units. To ensure there was time to issue orders and mobilize the units in Kurand, sacrificing Suimei-dono and the caravan was the only way...”

So there was no other way. In other to save the many, they had to discard the few. The logic was correct, but wasn’t it too much for the people who didn’t want to be sacrificed?

The idea that Suimei was in the dark about this made Reiji really anxious.

Mizuki who was beside Reiji was blinking tears away from the corner of her eyes because of this cruel blow.

“This is too much, this is really too much...”

Her moan and tears were definitely her true feelings. She had the tenacity to take part in the Demon King subjugation campaign, but she was still a girl... The kingdom summoned them to seek their help, but treated those who didn't help in such a way. When she heard about this, Mizuki couldn't help sobbing in sorrow.

It was the same for Titania. She lowered her head with her face a mixture of regret, pain and depression. This happened right after befriending them.

Once again, Gregory kneeled onto the ground.

“My most sincere apologies!”

What's the use of apologizing like this. It wouldn't change the fact that Suimei was in danger. Reiji couldn't find the words to respond, even his wrath had burnt out. The only thing left was a melancholy he couldn't shake away. The figure of the middle-age knight with his forehead on the ground was right in front of him. What was he thinking when he made this apology? Was he just making a show of apology with a look of absolute sincerity, but he was actually suppressing a smile in his heart?

How could he find out his true intentions? As Reiji was thinking about things that made him hate himself.

Ah—

Reiji felt inspiration struck like lightning.

Is that so. Thinking it through calmly, it was easy to understand.

“Reiji-kun?”

Mizuki looked at Reiji who seemed to have understood something—

“That’s enough, Gregory-san.”

“H-Hero-dono?”

He put his hands on Gregory’s shoulders, ending his long apology. That’s right, there was no need to apologize. Or rather, he should be thankful to Gregory. Because—

“Gregory-san. When we asked about this, you should have been told not to divulge everything. You must have been ordered to tell us the Mazoku is in the vicinity, and guide us to some other place.”

Titania and Gregory were dumbstruck, and Mizuki asked immediately:

“Reiji-kun, what is the matter?”

“If Gregory-san was really an underling of that noble Hardias, he wouldn’t need to tell us about Suimei in the first place. Gregory-san just needed to let us keep running away, and not tell us something that would make us distrust him.”

“Ah...”

Mizuki’s mutter of comprehension was soft, but it was clearer than any other sound in the vicinity.

Earning distrust. That’s right, the words did seem strange when she thought about it. If he told them the truth about Suimei’s situation, it would definitely earn their ire. If he understood that, then he wouldn’t have done so. If it was the underlings of the ones who planned this, they would definitely hide the facts about Suimei.

But Gregory still told them all of this, probably because there was something in his heart that couldn’t be twisted. And because of this sense of justice, he couldn’t hold it in anymore.

“I am very sorry. I only realize this now. I am truly sorry for shouting at you without thinking properly.”

“Hero-dono...”

Gregory’s voice started choking as Reiji lower his head and conveyed his thoughts clearly.

Seeing him like this, Titania also said:

“Gregory, my sincere apologies. I didn’t trust you until I heard what Reiji said.”

Gregory lowered his head deeply when he heard that.

And as if he was confessing a sin, he slowly said:

“... I couldn’t do it. Tricking the people who had nothing to do with this world but was summoned to defeat the Demon King, and even accepted this duty. However, pretending not to know anything when their friend is in danger, is inhumane...”

Gregory who opened his heart to the others lowered his head once more.

“My deep apologies. I couldn’t do anything.”

“That’s enough. Enough. Because—”

That’s right, if anyone was to be blamed, it was all his own fault. Reiji was the only one who was summoned, but his two friends were dragged in. He even ignored his friend’s advice, which led to this. Hence—

“... Reiji-sama?”

Titania asked as Reiji got up and turned his back.

But Reiji didn't turn back, so Titania called out to him anxiously again.

“W-Where do you want to go, Reiji-sama?”

“...Do you even need to ask? I'm going to rescue Suimei now.”

“How can that be, what do you want to do by going there now!?”

“H-Hero-dono! I understand how you feel, but you wouldn't make it even if you go now! There are no horses now either!”

“There is another horse. Rofuri's horse.”

“Y-You are right Reiji, but there's nothing you can do even if you go now! Even if you make it, there is still an army of Mazoku there. You will just be throwing your life away!”

Reiji couldn't refute Titania's counsel. What she said was true, there was no doubt about it. Titania stopped him again:

“Reiji-sama, please reconsider this. If anything happened to Reiji-sama, Then who will defeat Nakshatra?”

“... Ugh!”

Yes, just like Titania said, Since he accepted their request and came here, that

meant he was already the hero. Forgetting that and running amok because of his emotions and losing his life, was in a way betraying them.

— Even so, there were some things he couldn't accept.

“No...”

“R-Reiji-sama?”

“I don't want to abandon Suimei. Suimei is my friend, so...”

He was gritting his teeth from regret and clenching his fist, but Reiji didn't give up, he still want to help his friend. Just like Mizuki, Suimei was his irreplaceable friend. That's why he didn't want to lose him. It might already be too late, but he didn't want to just stand idly by.

Titania looked at him with a worried gaze. From her eyes, it was clear she was in a dilemma between subjugating the Demon King and her own feelings. She probably didn't know what to do.

Shifting Titania out of his sight, Reiji turned towards Mizuki.

“... Mizuki.”

“I-I want to...”

“Mizuki! Let's go! To help Suimei!”

Grabbing Mizuki's shoulders, Reiji urged the young girl. Urging her strongly to help their friend, because he believed that if it was her, she will definitely agree.

"Ah, ugh..."

When he noticed, Mizuki was trembling a little.

"Ah..."

From her deep black eyes, Reiji could tell that Mizuki was trembling from fear.

That's right, this young girl entered the battlefield for the first time just now. Her first fight, facing off against the Mazoku for the first time. Back then, Reiji felt her fear during the battle. If that was the case, was it really fine to force this young girl to take on the Mazoku army with him?

No, it's definitely not fine. It's not fine pushing such a burden on a trembling young girl at all.

At this instant, the term 'being full of oneself' floated in his mind. Thinking back about how everyone else thought, he looked around him again, and saw doubt in everyone's faces.

"... I am sorry, Mizuki."

"R-Reiji-kun?"

He turned his back to the voice calling out to him after apologizing. Even now, he still didn't want to give up. So—

“Just me alone would be fine, everyone please wait in a safe place. Rofuri-san!”

Reiji shouted at Rofuri who was just returning from a patrol some distance away. Rofuri who didn't know what was happening tilted his head as he rode over.

“Yes? How may I serve, Reiji-sama?”

“Lend me your horse.”

“Hmm? Alright, no problem, what are you...”

As Rofuri dismounted, the voice of two people echoed out as if they were trying to cut him off.

“Please wait, Reiji-sama!”

“Wait, Reiji-kun!”

The cries came from behind Reiji. At this moment, Reiji—

Suimei who left the caravan to chase after Lefille was walking in the forest as he track the traces of the girl's magic presence. He couldn't catch up

immediately probably because Lefille left rather swiftly in order to not trouble the caravan. It wasn't strange for the girl who left according to Galeo's wishes without any complains to act this way.

As he strolled in the forest in search of Lefille, Suimei looked up at the forest canopy obscuring his view of the cloudy sky and thought:

This place is completely untamed. Wild beasts or monsters from a fantasy world will probably show up...

Suimei stopped for a moment to rest and leaned against the tree before him. He drank about a mouthful of water from his canteen, and sighed. It was a given that there were monsters here. The forest of this different world was obviously much more dangerous than the world he came from.

I actually entered a place like this by my own will, ara...

He probably felt that it was strange, or that this was a foolish action. But even if Suimei asked himself that, he couldn't get an answer anyway as his doubt started to expand in his mind. At this moment, right before he moistened his throat with water again, Suimei asked nonchalantly.

“— I am sorry for making you so tense, but please spare me from your blade.”

“—!?”

These words were directed at the killing intent behind him that was filled with nervousness.

Suimei's calm voice echoed in the serene forest. Shortly after, the noise of grass being trampled could be heard, and a certain familiar voice that was filled with bafflement entered his ears.

"... Suimei-kun? Why are you here?"

"Well, as you can see, I came here for you."

Looking back, the figure of Lefille with the tip of her sword drooping down was right behind her. Because Suimei had a weak sense of presence, Lefille thought he was a beast that was stalking her, and was planning to cleave him along with the tree he was leaning on in half.

"You chased after me...? That's too reckless, it is dangerous to stay with me alright? Why did you do that?"

"Well, it's because leaving you alone is too dangerous. I am very concerned."

"D-Don't worry. I can manage on my own. You are just butting into my affairs unnecessarily."

"You can deal with the danger by yourself?"

"Yes."

That's how proud and headstrong Lefille was. Suimei made an accusation with a sarcastic smile:

“Pardon me for being blunt, but do you have enough food and water?”

“Ugh... Well, that...”

“Is that so?”

Lefille was dumbstruck as she averted her gaze awkwardly. As the girl before Suimei was being forced to admit her defeat, Lefille thought of a retort and turned back to her usual serious expression.

“But you are not carrying any luggage too right? Someone who didn’t even prepare his own provision is not qualified—”

“Are you still going to say that after seeing this?”

As if he was trying to break her serious expression, Suimei said casually as he took out a luggage bag from the briefcase he was carrying, even though it was much larger than the briefcase.

“... To tell me off...”

“What was that about being qualified? Are you saying the amount of provision I prepared is not qualified?”

Before Suimei who seemed rather arrogant, Lefille was shocked.

The amount was definitely up to standard. Suimei’s student briefcase made use of magic to expand its capacity. Even the combination of Kabbalah and Alchemy could only increase the capacity to that of a 150 litre foreign made

luggage bag.

<TL: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah>>

“... What is this weird magic item?”

“Calling it weird, how mean... Anyway, you can't say I am an unnecessary busybody now, right?”

“That might be so... Suimei-kun, do you really think it is fine to stay with me?”

“What can I do if I say I am regretting it very much?”

“Erm... I am sorry.”

“Not at all. If I will regret it immediately, I wouldn't have come. Don't worry about it.”

Facing Lefille who was lowering her head with a gloomy expression, Suimei answered as if he was joking. That's right, he wouldn't be here if he wasn't worried about how Lefille felt, it was impossible for him to regret this.

Even though he said that, Lefille still couldn't accept the way Suimei cut off his retreat path without anything to gain.

“But I am being targeted by the Mazoku you know?”

“True.”

“If that is so...”

If that is so, how should I put it? Lefille understood she was in the weaker position, and couldn't make such high handed speech. Looking at Lefille who was caught in anxiety, Suimei spoke:

“Lefille, you think it would be better if I stayed with the caravan and leave you alone?”

“That is...”

Suimei raised a different question to Lefille who couldn't answer. Peering through the forest canopy, the sky was cloudy just like the gloomy atmosphere between them. Suimei said calmly as if he was asking the question to the sky.

“— Hey, tell me the truth Lefille, which side do you think is better?”

“What do you mean...”

“For you, would you rather I come here or stay with the caravan?”

“D-Do you even need to ask!? Staying with the caravan is better! That's what you should do!”

“Really?”

“R-Really.”

Lefille made a face that seemed a little angry, and answered as if she was confirming something. Was she angry because she was not believed, or was she just putting on a strong front? Suimei pointed at Lefille and dealt the final blow.

“Then, can you swear to Alshuna that you are not lying?”

“What!? That is...”

“How about it?”

“... You really are a mean man.”

After Lefille sighed in resignation, Suimei asked again:

“Well then, how do you feel about it?”

“Ahhh, it’s great here if you can come. But—”

“In that case, isn’t it fine?”

“Huh—”

“Nothing, there is no need to debate whether this is a wise choice. It’s fine if we feel like it, so let’s stop the topic here. This is the smoother way of dealing with it, right?”

“Ah...”

Suimei looked at Lefille who turned silent after hearing something unexpected.

It's true. Even if they discuss this further, what could they achieve? The best way of doing things couldn't be found if you don't search for it. Just arriving at the answer and saying it out would be enough. No matter how much she argued, the sorrow and pain in her heart wouldn't fade.

That's why he didn't want to continue arguing about it. No matter how much they argue, the conclusion wouldn't change. Hence, Suimei interrupted what Lefille wanted to say.

"... What? You still have some complaints?"

"No. Everything is as you said in the beginning."

Her voice was more cheerful than earlier. She didn't accept it outright, but she still rolled with it.

Suimei scratched his head and sighed. From the perspective of a third party, his choice right now wasn't correct. Doing this would only give him disadvantages. But the decision on whether this action was right had to be made by the person himself. If the subject thought that it was correct, it wouldn't be a big deal even if it wasn't the best or wisest choice.

— And brooding too much about the pros and cons at this point would be rather shameful.

"I'm sorry, Suimei-kun."

"Why do you need to apologize?"

“It’s probably my fault that the Mazoku came. That’s why...”

“Ahhh, what that bulky Mazoku said? But at that time, it seemed like it was the first time he remembered you though. No matter how I see it, I don’t think he was targeting you from the very beginning.”

Suimei objected to her apology. That was just excessive self reproach on herself. What Rajas said was fragmented, and there was a part about blaming Lefille that didn’t make sense. The adventurers all blamed her for the appearance of Rajas but, if you think about it carefully, it had no relation to her. The Mazoku came looking for a different person and encountered Lefille coincidentally would be a more convincing story. It just happened that everyone panicked and didn’t recover from the shock of being attacked by the Mazoku, and an easy target to cast the blame on just happened to be nearby. It was a result of a series of unfortunate coincidence.

Not everyone could keep their cool and judgement, without someone like that around, being forced into a corner will result in this happening most of the time.

However, Lefille didn’t seem convinced.

“However, they actually divert some of their forces into Aster when they were still in a standoff with Thoria and various other western nations. That could only mean...”

“What, you think the Mazoku diverted some of their forces just for you? You seem awfully confident in your own power.”

“Wa, I’m speaking seriously though? Don’t make fun of me please!”

“Heh heh, my bad my bad. True, Lefille is strong.”

Suimei apologized for his joke and flattered Lefille’s strength. But Lefille responded in a sharp tone with an unhappy expression for some reason.

“... It feels as if I am being toyed around like a fool.”

“No such thing. Didn’t Lefille cleave the opponent I had a hard time fighting in two easily?”

That was Suimei’s true feelings in the battle a little ago. But, Lefille still had something on her mind. There was a word or two she wanted to say. But Suimei ignored that and continued what he was saying.

“So... that’s right, that tough Mazoku, that thing he said about Lefille being the survivor of Noshias... If I remember right, Noshias was...”

Only having inquired a bit about the expression, he was cut off by Lefille’s weary voice.

“...You’re unfamiliar about the culture of this region, yet you know about it.”

“Ahh... well yeahh...”

Suimei thought about it a little, and made a vague response. That reminded him about what his background was suppose to be. Being unfamiliar with common knowledge but having knowledge about international affairs, it was only natural if others found him weird.

Suimei nagged to himself in his head, and Lefille who seemed to have resigned slowly spoke.

“Ah... that's right, it's as he said, I'm a survivor of Noshias.”

Lefille revealed her identity she had been hiding all along. She sounded out her confession, and explaining that she was the survivor of the country destroyed by the Mazoku. One couldn't help empathizing with her when listening to her sorrowful voice.

“True, that nation lies on the boundary between the realm of humans and the Mazoku territory, so they were the first to be attacked.”

“You know a lot.”

“...Well, it was a serious event.”

It was the reason why Reiji and they were summoned to this world, how could he forget.

Lefille returned to the topic and affirmed in a forlorn voice.

“...Ahh, since ancient times, Noshias was the barrier keeping out the Mazoku.

But it fell in less than a month.”

“I heard from someone that it was an army of a million.”

“A million troops... I don’t know where you heard that but was it true? We haven’t seen that number of living beings, so we can’t be sure.”

Her response was calm and collected. But that roundabout way of putting it seemed to be implying something.

To Suimei who couldn’t fully grasp what she said, Lefille’s eyes turned sharp, as if she was watching a black and white film.

“It was an ocean. From one end of the horizon to the next, the Mazoku was like an ocean, forming an army of uncountable numbers, attacking us from across the border.”

The look that Lefille just had, that impression. Suimei vaguely imagined that, a swallowing noise ringing out, living things advancing like a tsunami, what in the world could it be? The horizon disappearing, and that side being flooded with by a group without human morals. It would be equal to nature’s wrath, nay, a greater wickedness since individually they all had purpose. If that were to attack, could humans bear it? As that thought rushed in his head, suddenly Lefille...

“What I saw at the northernmost fortress was, that scene. At that time, I didn’t only experience just that much.”

“Only that, it was a matter where you were driven with no margin to spare.”

“Ahh, it’s as you said, we tried with everything we had. We shot at the advancing Mazoku in front of our eyes.”

“So, did that tough Mazoku at that time...”

To Suimei’s vague question, Lefille returned a nod of affirmation.

“Rajas. He was after that. After collecting the survivors and retreating, he was left with the task of fighting. It’s also as you heard previously, He seemed to be one of the seven Demon Generals.”

“I guess, he was saying something like that.”

To Lefille’s words, he remembered Rajas’ speech; He said he was one of the beings entrusted with an army by Nakshatra.

“Seven of them huh”

“Ahh, that time also, in the midst of the fight, I remember I heard him say that. I also don’t understand in detail but he boasted that the seven armies were divided into three regiments.”

“Three. And considering that there could be over one million then, if they join together what do we do...”

It was getting increasingly unpleasant of a talk.

He hadn't experienced something like that, but Suimei's tone hinted that he'd had his share of hardships. By simply multiplying one million by three, there would be three times the numbers. But if Lefille's story is to be completely believed, then it can't be thought of so simply. With such a number and the Mazoku being non-humans, pushing this burden onto the handful of summoned heroes was asking for the impossible. Suimei himself was also in this world but, as expected if the world was hoping on the heroes to defeat them then the future is doubtful.

“So, at that time, the me who fought Rajas, my legs and hands couldn't face his power. The army was also in disarray, and after that, I, at that female Mazoku...”

There was an unfamiliar word in what Lefille just said. Suimei casually asked concerning that.

“Female Mazoku? Is there such a thing?”

“No.. it's nothing. So then...The reason why Noshias was the first to be targeted, was probably not just because of its geographical location.”

That was the core of the story hinted at by splitting and coming here with the army. Moreover, without saying so, Suimei who knew a bit about it also had that belief.

“The spirit right?”

“Spirit?”

“Ahh, it’s about the power Lefille has. It’s what they call it from where I’m from. Spirit.”

“Are there other people who have a power like mine in the east?”

“Uhh, not quite like Lefille’s, but I guess they are in the same category.”

“...?”

Suimei didn’t quite know what to call it himself, but Lefille was even more confused. Of course. Most likely, this world had a different definition of spirits compared to the other world. This world, like the other world, the power of humans were much weaker than that of nature and mysterious origin. First of all, without the foundational knowledge gained from the research of multiple magic, the information this world had of spirits were pitifully limited. Hence, they probably didn’t understand what kind of an existence spirits were.

Lefille paused, trying to digest and understand what Suimei said, but in the end, without an answer, continued back on topic.

“I don’t really know what to call it, but it’s as you said, we call upon spirits. My country, since long ago, called upon that power in response to the Mazoku.”

“That reminds me, you said that your swordsmanship was also handed down over generations, is that also?”

“Aa. My ancestors were an existence that was born between spirits and

humans. In order for humans to resist the Mazoku, the goddess Alshuna arranged it. This swordsmanship was also born then, and it has helped the heroes who have called on that power as well.”

“Heroes, seriously?”

To the unexpected mention of the word in Lefille’s story, Suimei muttered quietly. It couldn’t be, Lefille’s ancestors were the ones who became the power of the called upon heroes long ago. And now, instead of being with the heroes, the descendants were with him, what kind of twisted karma is that? One can’t help but think that some unknown entity is toying with them.

Thereupon, Lefille’s facial expression showed loneliness and sadness.

“I also thought that I wanted to protect people, to save people. But ultimately, that dream ended. And now I’m in this sorry state.”

Saying that, Lefille cast her eyes down dejectedly. After running away from her homeland, becoming an adventurer, being constantly slandered, she tasted loneliness. On top of that personal history, her dreary heart called for help. Yearning and yearning for that unfulfilled dream, her last face was one of a girl betrayed by reality. That, was certainly there. The wish to protect, the wish to save others, nothing but pure honest craving, denying any ill will, that unreasonable wish that was snatched away, she had that kind of heartbreaking face.

She had power. That’s why, she made the best of it. For someone. But, she couldn’t do anything no matter what. Like she was trying to get some kind of recompense. Nay, if she did it, even now she, to that sense...

“Hey, Lefille. Mazoku... what in the world are they?”

Despite the look in her eyes saying she wanted to get away from the topic, Lefille suddenly answered the question.

“Hm huh. To be honest, I don’t really know. Most likely, there’s nobody in the world who really knows about them. Aside from the little in stories handed down from since long ago, there’s probably no way to get information about the Mazoku.”

“And that “little in stories?””

“In those olden days, the evil god that fought with Alshuna... was what was said before. That evil god who boasted of enormous power, in the end was driven to the dimensional threshold by Alshuna, the elements, and the spirits.”

“Ah”

Suimei agreed. It concurred with what he’d learned during a previous trip. In general he remembered the story, most likely her calling it the space between worlds is what the exterior world is called here, the other world is at the cavity at that threshold, the world’s edge. Seeing Suimei nod in affirmation, Lefille continued.

“It was said that the Mazoku were the servants of that evil god. Accepting the evil god’s divine blessing, in the chaos of just the strife and death, they filled this world.”

Chaos, an incredible term came up. No, it was already an incredible topic

when the evil god is involved. In the end, the result of the devil worship, had the same intention as the evil gods of the outer worlds. Then, next is...

“You said divine protection but, then the origin of that power of the Mazoku is the evil god?”

“Ahh, that reminds me, I have a feeling that that theory does also exist. I also don't remember well but...”

“Hmm..”

“What's wrong? Suimei-kun”

“Mazoku... what they are. I have my own theory.”

“Fumu. Your thinking eh? Interesting.”

“Do you want to hear it?”

“Yeah because as it is I do have an interest in it”

...is what she said but what he was thinking was pretty admirable. Lefille was laughing with sheer admiration. However, that face was honestly an interest from the heart, and showed her anticipation. The possibility that he arrived at the truth was improbable. Anyway, about that.

Now then, first...

“Listen, first is, from the definition of the evil god in your story.”

Suimei had come into contact with what was known as devils or spirits in his original world. They basically exist in the outer world, a theoretical existence that possessed power similar to that of legends. They could be summoned with spells, given a name and its existence defined. After that, they will appear in the world as devils or spirits.

The spirits defined in the original world were vague without a fixed appearance, just an information like existence. And god— the god here referring to a higher level of existence than spirits— was not just a vague existence like spirits, but a powerful body of information with a will of their own.

In other words the evil god is...

“... The evil god exists in the gaps between dimensions, which is the outer world, and its goal is to fill the world with chaos. Even now, it is watching this place closely from the outer world, hoping to accomplish its goal. But that thing’s existence is bounded there, and can’t interfere with this world directly like the times of the ancient goddess war. In its place, the Mazoku that serve the evil god inherit its will, and are bestowed with the powers of the evil god they worship, squirming in the dark to fill the world with chaos.”

“Muu...”

“Well... it’s a cliched story but, that’s the script if you think about our earlier conversation. Things started during the beginning of the world, when the seed of future strife was planted... oops”

Whether everything about the Mazoku was like that, he didn't know but, noticing his digression, he went back on topic.

“For practical problems that's fine but, concerning that puppet Mazoku... that's it. In the first place his specifications are different, because his body's strength is different than humans, they followed a different evolutionary path than living beings, or it's the case that the evil god designed them. Whichever one it is, I don't know for sure. That's the impression I got from the story before.”

“That's a quite interesting conjecture.”

“Thanks. If it's the case with divine protection then, then I expect that most of their power is the evil god's. The black energy coming from the Mazoku is that.”

To the concluding Suimei, Lefille slipped in a question.

“...? That's not a characteristic of the Mazoku?”

“That's right. It's not a power that those living creatures carry naturally. The power inconsistent with the world and nature is not produced by that world, it's the truth that it's definitely not produced. Nobody would deliberately be harmful to themselves right? The world is the same. That's why it is useful to depend on existences that cannot exist in the world. This power that runs contrary to the logic of this world can only exist because of the influence of something not of this world. For example, what's that thing called...”

“Evil god huh.”

“Returning to the conversation, that’s how it is. At the point in time where the Mazoku could use that power, the evil god’s existence was proved. That talk was a pain though.”

Yes, the talk about the Mazoku resulted in a discussion about the evil god. That said, it took a great amount of trouble to arrive at that. Anyhow...

“Then, Alshuna is an existence facing the evil god so, this world’s humans and demi-humans, from the root of that belief are enemies to the evil god. That’s why he tries to kill the living things that don’t match his feelings.”

“...”

Suimei was holding firm to that belief, and Lefille looked like she was scrutinizing the contents of that discussion, narrowing her eyes. In that face there was some kind of agitation. Choosing the right time, Suimei fired a single word.

“So? Is there another theory you can get from that story?”

“True. That does work in the story. That’s the first time I’ve heard that argument with the evil god and the Mazoku. Based on the current argument, if I rethink the things I said, the legends become plausible.”

“It was a pretty interesting argument right?”

“Yeah. Surprising. You’ve thought about it considerably. Amazing, Suimei-

kun”

To the girl nodding sincerely, Suimei added in a supplement.

“Incidentally, that humans are able to fight with the Mazoku is because they have Alshuna’s divine blessing I think. Excluding Lefille, generally they carry the power of resistances for that purpose. The element hostile to the evil god obviously falls under that category, so sorcerer’s magic also has that effect.”

“ ... ”

“Yes. That’s why at the time when I was fighting the Mazoku, with the exception of magic that don’t use the elements as an intermediary, physical attacks also were ineffective. Because humans have their faith deeply intertwined with their lives, that power dwells within them. On top of that, the magic of this world is strongly linked to Alshuna and the spirits, the elements also have that power in them, giving them a big effect against the Mazoku. Sorcerers, through that magic with that subtle power, are able to defeat Mazoku. However, on the other hand, there is nobody born in this world like me, who don’t have that relation to the element, are expected to have their power become weak.”

Therefore.

“By the way I’d like to ask, when we fought with the Mazoku earlier, did beginner mage’s magic have effect on the Mazoku?”

After asking, Lefille thought for a bit, with knit brows she said in a far off voice.

“Well, the people who showed effectiveness and didn’t were scattered but...”

The sorcerers that were effective were, even if they weren’t using magic from long ago, they perceived a revelation, and they had a connection to the elements so they had effect. People who weren’t effective that was the first time they’d felt that revelation, so their connection to the element was weak and they couldn’t defeat the Mazoku. Is that not it?”

“Ahh, to go that far is...”

“Assuming that, is the story. Well, I think I’m probably right.”

There were few simple parts so it wasn’t definite, but he believed in it. Taking into account that Lefille was still piecing things together, generally this response is to be expected.

At any rate the answer came out. Because the Mazoku have the evil god’s blessing, basically they have resistances so only the magic here is effective.

However, if that power’s source was made to be established in the Mazoku’s current form, they are an existence of the underworld, so if you use that class, that magic will show effect.

That magic had effect after all for Suimei, his thoughts until now were because of what happened then.

“Suimei-kun”

“Hmm?”

“Just who are you?”

That casual inquiry came out was because of the talk until now right. Rather than doubting his true character, she was simply really wondering what it is. To her question, Suimei gave no response.

“Now then. Or maybe I should put it, isn't it about time to find a place to rest?”

“Yeah.”

In the darkening forest, Lefille gazed at the deep blue sky while agreeing. Shrugging her shoulders dejectedly, something was amiss, or was it just imagination? With that girl, Suimei once again began to walk.

That night after meeting up with Lefille in the forest. Suimei immersed himself in the clear night sky, gazing at the stars of this different world from a boulder with a great view by himself.

“It should be that direction, and...”

With the dark purple darkness as the background, the beautiful stars were spread across the heavens. Looking at the night sky that definitely could not be seen in the polluted modern world, Suimei was divining the correct direction through Astrology. He wasn't familiar with the stars in this different world, but

he had stayed in this world for quite some time now, and he had gazed upon the night skies numerous times. He understood the position of the moon and the stars, and could make out the basics such as directions.

However—

(Even if I use them, it's only about this much eh...)

One of the things that kept him from calming down after coming to this world was still troubling him. That's right, as stated before, even if he is able to, Suimei can only divinate this much from the stars in this world. Certainly, by observing the star's spectrum - referring to the rays of light emitted by the stars here - and analyzing them using magic, he could determine which stars had which type of attributes, and it would be possible to utilize them in spells. But the divination that was synonymous with Astrology was done by using the radiance of the most effective stars, which harbours the name of the stars and their meaning, and utilizing the influence of the stars in the most efficient manner. As it was not possible to do this, he couldn't use Astrology to its full potential.

The spell Meteor drop would be a good example. In his original world, as long as the conditions for time and location were fulfilled, it boasted of atrocious magic power. But in this world where he couldn't draw out the powers of mysteries, the best he could do would be less than half the maximum power under normal conditions. With the powerful spells he depended on greatly in combat becoming like this, Suimei couldn't help sighing depressedly.

After finishing his conversation with Lefille about the Mazoku, Suimei and Lefille walked into the depth of the forest to search for a place to make camp.

They encountered a pack of wolves on the way there, but they didn't run into any monsters, and found a water source, and a cave that could keep the cold and humidity away.

The sun had already set half way by then as the day slowly becomes the night. The two of them prepared as fast as possible, and after eating dinner, it was already this late.

Watching the stars, Suimei thought about what would happen hereafter, but he had not decided his course of action yet. Running here because of his emotions was one thing, but what should he do from hence forth? Taking everything into consideration, fighting with the Mazoku called Rajas is probably unavoidable but...

“He said that he'd bring along his comrades huh.”

He thought about the demon general Rajas with his huge body, and one of the things he said.

Rajas told Lefille nonchalantly that he will bring his minions along. Suimei didn't think it would be in the hundreds of thousands like Lefille said, but it was true that they were making some kind of military maneuver. They probably have to steel themselves to fight a large number of enemies.

Therefore, Suimei was vexed that meteor drop couldn't be used. Although it wouldn't be effective unless he used a special kind of spell, just like that time when he used Ashurbanipal's Flame, he would be able to forcefully overwhelm the Mazoku with brute power. He felt disheartened his powerful wide area attack won't be at full power.

As Suimei was sighing in lamentation.

“Hmm? Lefille?”

When did she come out from the cave? In Suimei’s vision, the beautiful figure of Lefille who was dressed in a knight’s attire headed off somewhere. Lefille walked unsteadily as if she was sleepwalking, heading into the depths of the forest like a puppet controlled by strings.

... Where was she going this late in the night without even a weapon? Suimei couldn’t fathom what the swordswoman was thinking. After eating dinner, she said she was tired and retired early. With the fight against the Mazoku, the dispute with the caravan and dealing with the pack of wolves, she should have accumulated a lot of fatigue. That should be so, but what was she trying to do now?

“If I remember correctly, that way is...” That’s right, the place Lefille was going to was the water source. It was a somewhat high place that had a brook and could have a small waterfall. However, the cave they currently were in already had enough water so there was no need to go over there right?

“ ... ”

There was an uneasy feeling in the air. Suimei rubbed the back of his neck, feeling an uneasy premonition.

Lefille and that shaky way of walking, it didn’t seem normal. Moreover, she wasn’t carrying a weapon that normally would be necessary in the forest. Something was happening. In that case, it’s better to chase after her. With that

thought in mind, Suimei jumped off the boulder and chased after Lefille into the forest.

Cutting through the thickets and weaving between the trees, he delved into the forest. Soon, he arrived at the water source. As he was about to step out of the bushes in front of the water source to search for the girl, he slipped on something like a piece of cloth.

“What’s this?”

It was a close call. If he hadn’t noticed, then like the time when he was summoned to this world, he would have fallen on his ass. To ascertain what he just stepped on, Suimei picked it up and spread it out. And realized what it was.

“Eh...”

Suimei made a confused sound unconsciously and his mind blanked. With a stupid looking face that anyone would have seeing that, he held it up and realized it was... clothes. The things that people wear, that you put on... in short, clothes. What’s more, they were clothes that Suimei found familiar. He had seen these just a little ago when he was on the boulder, the knight clothes Lefille was wearing.

“Uhh.. wait a sec... this is...”

Confused and flustered, Suimei stammered to himself, unable to form proper sentences because of that thing spread out before him. Confusion and panic made him even more anxious, making Suimei stutter even more. After looking carefully, he affirmed that women’s underwear were also there. In other words,

Lefille currently is not wearing her clothes and underwear, meaning that...

“That girl is naked right now...”

After a bit, Suimei grasped the situation completely and fell into a dull state. He knew exactly what the clothes and underwear meant on the ground meant. Suimei processed it in his mind as if it was in a way the procedure to summon devils. So, without any extraneous intentions, he glanced over towards a certain direction, as if he was guided by invisible strings. And just as he thought, there was a stark naked Lefille over by the waterside.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

Suimei cried out in his head while suppressing his emotions. Of course, those emotions were those of shame. The feeling of unease that made his neck felt strange earlier, he wondered why he felt that way back then. Suimei was filled with regrets for allowing his emotions to lead him to this place.

Even though it was a misunderstanding, but from the perspective of a third party, it would seem like he came here with the intend to peek on a girl bathing. If someone was to see him right now, he would definitely be labeled a pervert.

No, instead of that, he should...

“No, don’t look Suimei. You can’t look! Well truthfully I kinda want to see but... that’s not it! Just forget everything. Forget everything, me! Just forget it all and turn back...”

That’s right, with a red face, Suimei was denying something in his head. With his ability to think calmly being completely gone, Suimei fell into confusion.

He doesn’t have any plans to watch carefully and burn this scene deeply into his eyes. Suimei couldn’t deal with these kinds of situation as most of his head was devoted to magic. Together with his serious character, terms like large and bountiful, exceptional figure, beautiful proportions had been purged from his mind as if these terms were sworn enemies.

At that time, Suimei suddenly heard a voice.

“...Aa....ku...e...”

“Eh?”

The air quivered and Suimei breathed weakly. Forgetting about situation, he let out a sound in surprise. Just now, to his ears, he thought he heard something indicating distress. Something like moaning or gasping, like the voice of a girl in pain or someone burning up with a fever.

Is this not merely a bath? Remembering the gasping, Suimei looked once more. Glancing in that direction, he saw Lefille leaning on a boulder near the water's edge. Looking closely, there was a strange look in her eyes. Rather than bathing, she appeared unconscious and suffering in the water. Why was she groaning? What was making her wheeze in anguish? At that time, Suimei saw it. On her abdomen, there was an ominous tattoo that seemed to be encroaching onto the girl.

“...Ah”

Unaffected, he realized what was going on the moment he saw the tattoo. Her raised arm, her sudden voice, the eyes that saw her, his own conveniently bashful heart, all of it vanished with astonishment.

A curse.

As soon as he realized this, all the superfluous things he had thought up until now vanished. Why? As he got a hold of himself, instead of the confidence that he could deal with it, his heart sank with helpless thoughts, that here as well, there were girls in pain because of a curse.

A curse. Yes, a curse. It is the first time he had seen one like that, but he probably wasn't wrong. The tattoo on Lefille's abdomen was proof of it. The dark red overlapping lines were blemishing her white beautiful skin. Another world's curse. Whenever the tattoo pulsed because of magic, Lefille's moan grew in intensity, and her body squirmed from the pain.

Then who, with what intention, would have done such a curse?

"...Tsch"

In Suimei's mouth was an overwhelming bitterness. This was the feeling of someone who knew curses very well. An embodiment of hatred from Suimei, as someone who had deep dealings with someone who cursed others, and someone who was cursed.

That's right, there was a time when Suimei wished that he could break a curse. The girl that suffered in grief because of the ruinous curse was there. That's why he studied curses for a time in order to break them. He couldn't forgive the existence of such an unreasonable misfortune in this world.

Therefore, what was happening to the girl in front of his eyes was painful to watch to him as well. That impure movement, it was intolerable.

That's a curse huh. It's vulgar. And against a young girl, how heretical.

Sorrow. That noble girl imprisoned by the curse and compelled to perform such obscene acts. There was no other way to describe this other than sadness.

Why did the curse have to dirty pure girls?

Why was the curse burned onto girls?

Why did curses always make girls cry in anguish

Fuelled by fury, Suimei's heart burned with anger. And with those thoughts, he approached the rock where the girl was.

"Lefille"

As if he wanted to just talk to her, Suimei gently tapped the shoulders of the girl panting in pain.

Lefille looked up with blurry eyes, probably recovering her consciousness a little.

"Ah, uh...?"

The face that was lifted because of the voice still showed signs of the curse's influence and was red with confusion.

"Ah..."

Lefille finally realized someone was calling out to her, and made a sound that she was aware. But as she stared into the eyes of the man who had a wavering look of pity, the girl's pupils reflect despair like never before.

As they looked at each other, Lefille's face gradually became twisted. Why are you here. Why are you looking? I didn't want anybody to see my disgraceful sight. Lefille's pained expression seemed to be screaming.

However, even after noticing another person's presence, she didn't stop as if her actions were forced by an unseen power. Because of the curse's fever, she had no control over her body and she continued to rub herself against the rock to relieve the fever a little.

“Ahh... ahhh...”

Yes, from the perspective of a third party, it was a seductive action as if she couldn't help soothing the fire within her.

“No... please, don't look... please...”

Lefille's faint voice now was not because of the painful fever. It was a plea from a girl in pain, who didn't want anyone to see her indecent side.



After some time, the curse's effect seemed to fade, and she calmed down. To Lefille, who was on the ground putting on the knights clothes he had brought, Suimei quietly asked about the curse.

“Is it a curse?”

He asked to confirm. And as expected, Lefille nodded without looking at him. When Suimei was about to ask again, Lefille who was lowering her head with depressed eyes suddenly said:

“I am...”

“...”

“... I am someone related to the royal family of Noshias... No, Noshias is gone, I should say that I was someone related to them.”

Lefille looked down and sighed. It was a sigh as if she was mocking herself, as the girl continued her monologue depressedly. Lefille then continued:

“The Noshias royal family— as a branch family, the bloodline of spiritual power run in my clan. Because I was born with powerful spiritual powers, I was raised with the goal of protecting Noshias from early on. Day after day, I practiced my swordsmanship and ways to use my spiritual powers just to protect my homeland from the Mazoku that would attack from the north.”

Lefille then turned towards Suimei to confirm something.

“In the day, I told you that Noshias was defeated by the Mazoku right?”

“...Yeah...”

“Back then... about half a year ago, the northernmost fortress entrusted to us was stamped out by the hordes of Mazoku. And I was separated with the comrades that fought alongside me. By the time we fought at the capital, there were only a few people left.”

It was a harsh memory, and her voice oozed with pain. And yet, Lefille, as if

she had to talk, continued on.

“The Mazoku’s attack was terrifyingly fast. There wasn’t even time for the citizens to escape out of the country. The Mazoku controlled the majority of the country in no time. By that point, we had almost no means to resist. Normally, a summoning for a hero would also be done, but it was too late. They could only call on my power, but my strength was futile against the Mazoku army. Due to the overwhelming differences in numbers and resources, our army renowned for being elite was also crushed. In the end, in order to show the Mazoku our resolve, the people of Noshias chose to defend the city until the very end.”

Making a last stand. In the first place, there was no option to run. Because of the pride of the northern people, they wouldn’t yield to the Mazoku, and struggled to the end to not let the Mazoku do as they wanted.

However—

“While everyone else was preparing for the last time, I was given a different task. I wasn’t allowed to die in the siege because of the spirit’s power. The spirit’s power could not be allowed to die out, and so, I was not permitted to fight until the end at the castle. As a result of this power, my father, my mother, my friends, everyone that was important to me, I had to run and abandon it all.”

This must have been the greatest regret in her life, and Lefille’s shoulders hung with regret.

Suimei was born in modern Japan, and would firstly be happy about being alive in such a situation. But for the people of this world who live for the sake of battle and took pride in the duty passed down by their ancestors, this situation

was probably unbearable. For someone who was bestowed with more spiritual powers than power, this was even more true.

“It was in the middle of that. I got cursed. While escaping to other countries, I fought with the Mazoku, and then...”

“It’s that guy...?”

“...No, not Rajas. The one who cursed me was a female Mazoku commanding Rajas and the army. That Mazoku seemed to specialize in curses. What her intention was, I don’t know, but in that fight where I was fighting with everything on the line, she cursed me as if it was child's play. It feels as if insects creep onto me, and I have to comfort myself in that indecent way.”

That was everything. Lefille who was bound helplessly. Regarding the curse, that was the whole story. Her feelings of revenge, the matter of the curse, she had a lot of things weighing down on her.

At that point, Suimei suddenly noticed something about Lefille’s curse and what had happened earlier.

“Could it be, that at the inn and ...”

“Ahh, you remembered. That’s right. That night, I also searched for a place with water like this too. In the morning, when I woke up, I tried to avoid others and ran back to the inn. After that, it’s as you remember, I ran into you.”

Suimei continued asking.

“Do you know what causes the curse to activate?”

“When I utilize a lot of the spirit’s power, it becomes like this. Earlier I did the guild request for the subjugation of the monsters, and that's why.”

“And the cure to the curse?”

“I tried. I couldn’t do anything as I am not a mage, but even a prestigious priest from the Church of Salvation couldn’t do anything.”

Then, has she always been this way? Without a cure, without a way to suppress the curse, having to unconsciously deal with the curse without being found.

As if confirming it, Lefille stayed silent in despair, and then after a while, quietly laughed as if debasing herself.

“Fufufu...”

“Lefille?”

“Fucking laugh at me. At this girl. At the one with this vile curse. This...this...”

Saying that, Lefille grabbed Suimei by the collar. The girl holding him by the collar and laughing at herself. Unable to stand the truth, she forced herself to laugh in order to cast away her sorry state, but her stare was full of despair.

“It’s funny isn’t it! Held captive by the spirit’s power, me who had to abandon the people who fought to the end, it’s divine punishment! “I want to protect everyone with this power,” what bullshit. Right?!? Not in this story. Being cursed, living in disgrace because I can’t die...”

Divine punishment huh. That self condemnation, surely that absurdity is just the lamentation of the heart. Why can she laugh at that. In this world, where such pain is a common occurrence, why laugh? In those tears of despair, there was nothing funny.

“But this power protected Lefille before.”

“I... That’s true... I was, protected by it.”

“That’s the truth. So don’t look down on yourself too much.”

“But I ran. I still ran, even though I don’t want to abandon anyone.”

“Lefille...”

Suimei cast his eyes downwards, and the girl who couldn’t suppress her sobbing let go of Suimei’s collar.

Finally, Lefille’s shoulders trembled and she said:

“After my homeland is destroyed, to be left and cursed to sooth my wretched self in that way. Is there anything more miserable than this...”

Her homeland and people close to her were lost, and she was inflicted with this shameful curse on top of that. There was nothing more terrible for a woman. The sight of her tugged at his heart, and Suimei grabbed the shoulders of the tearing Lefille.

“Lefille. I’m sorry, I’m going to be a bit rude.”

“Ah...”

And then, removing her soaked jacket, he exposed her naked skin.

“Ahh, no...”

“...”

Lefille probably sensed danger when she was touched. Tightly closing her eyes, she made a stiff sound. The powerful swordswoman who fought the Mazoku bravely was nowhere to be found. Ignoring the girl who was frightened of men, he touched the cursed mark on her skin.

“Correspondence.”

What he had used was an analysis magic. He materialized a small version of the cursed mark on Lefille’s body onto his hand, and studied its composition. From the magic circle spreading out from his palm, the information of the spell structure flowed into his mind. Because of the actions it forced her to do, it was not a natural curse. As for classification, it was something similar to

Sympathetic Magic. Suimei understood that much, but even for him who had modern magical knowledge, he couldn't figure out the cure.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sympathetic_magic>

While grinding his teeth, Suimei infused some magic into his hand to apply a relieving magic.

“Uuu, gu...ahh”

For a bit, Lefille's pained voice became calmer and soothed. After the girl's breathing became steady, Suimei asked:

“How is the burning sensation?”

“Ahh... it's considerably better... That was...?”

“A magic of mine that reduces the effect of the curse. With this it's a bit better right?”

“Is that so. Up until now nobody could do something like that...”

A voice of relief. Yet, this made Suimei feel a sense of guilt. In the end, while he could interfere with the curse, that was only a temporary solution.

“Sorry. While I can temporarily weaken the curse, I don't have a way to get rid of it. This curse wasn't just simply casted onto Lefille's body. That's why, until we find the caster or the medium used to cast it, the curse won't be broken.”

Saying that, Suimei bowed his head in disappointment.

The curse cast on Lefille was one utilizing Sympathetic magic. Sympathetic magic, along with contact magic, was a way of classifying curses as popularized by England's anthropologist and occultist, James George Frazer. He believes that there were invisible connections between objects that had similar shape on the theoretical level, an idea grounded on mutual influence. Using this mysterious connection one could achieve the amplification of curses.

This type used an imitation of a person, such as a doll or a photo, to cast the spell on a person. A cursed doll in Japan and voodoo doll from Haiti were such examples. His findings indicate that the curse on Lefille probably belonged to this category. As it wasn't known what the medium was, or what the relationship the one who was cursed had with this medium, it was difficult to break such a spell.

"Sorry, this is everything I can do."

"...It's fine. Thanks."

Suimei realized his helplessness only when he faced a curse he couldn't undo. As she watched Suimei who apologized with such feelings, Lefille made a smile while holding back her pain.

After a while, drop by drop, tears flowed down Lefille's face. In the forest in the middle of nowhere, like when the rain begins, her tears fell.

"Uuuuu..."

Only Lefille knew how it felt. As an outsider, Suimei had a sympathetic expression with his mouth open, as if he was trying to say something. But, there probably were nothing he could say. No matter how much he thought, he wasn't qualified to wipe away her tears of despair and give her solace.

To Lefille who looked as if she would cry endlessly, Suimei could not utter a word.

A few days after the night when Suimei found out Lefille's curse. Being vigilant of dangerous beasts and monsters, especially the Mazokus, the two of them watch their surroundings carefully and had yet to exit the forest.

And so today, the two of them also had a simple lunch after following the river to a slightly open space.

The food from the magic bag and river water cleanse by magic were laid out. Lefille chewed on a hard piece of bread and pointed at a certain bottle.

"Suimei-Kun, can you please pass me the honey?"

"Ahh, here."

"Much thanks."

Suimei passed the bottle of honey to Lefille, who spread it on her bread while thanking him."

Facing the girl who was biting into her bread once again, Suimei said:

“Hey, Lefille.”

“Hmm, this bread is hard. Suimei-kun, it would be better to soak it in water when you eat it.”

“Ahh, I know, I wasn’t talking about that.”

“Don’t worry, the honey is quite sweet, mixing in a bit of water won’t affect its taste.”

“.....”

Suimei-kun shut his mouth as Lefille kept talking about her own thing. After the incident that day, she had been this way. She must be thinking of something, intentionally avoiding meaningful conversation with others. She kept interrupting Suimei, so the two didn’t have a proper conversation.

As expected, she became like this after that incident...

Yes, after her secret was found out, it wasn’t strange for Lefille finding it hard to face Suimei.

But--

“Hey Lefille.”

“... What is it, Suimei-kun? If it is about food, I don't need any more alright? I have enough, or do you want me to take something for you?”

“No, not that... there's honey on your cheeks.”

Lefille yelped in surprise when she heard Suimei, and wiped her cheeks hard, and glared at Suimei with accusatory eyes.

“C-Can't you tell me earlier... Why is there honey...”

“Ahh, actually there isn't any on your cheeks.”

Suimei replied nonchalantly, and Lefille stood up in anger.

“W-Why you! Are you toying with me!?”

“Sort of. Because of someone, we couldn't talk properly, so I thought this was a good chance.”

“Ughh... This is...”

“... Hey Lefille. We are moving together, so we need to communicate more alright? Didn't you say this before? If we could talk harmoniously, our teamwork will become better.”

“.....”

Her attitude that was like an act earlier changed all of a sudden, and the girl lowered her head in sorrow, with melancholy in her eyes. But there wasn't anything to gain in maintaining this status quo.

“Erm... How should I put this. I know things are awkward after that incident. I feel a bit embarrassed too, it might be a little difficult, but we should do our best to better our relationship.”

“That's enough, Suimei-kun. I am thankful for your concern, but please don't bother with me.”

“Lefille.”

Suimei showed a lonely expression. Her effort in repairing their relationship had been shattered by her rejection.

“This is a good opportunity, so I will make this clear. You shouldn't be here with me.”

“... Shouldn't be with you is...”

“If you are involved with me, you will suffer misfortune too. So keep your relations with me to the bare minimum.”

Lefille fell silent after saying her piece, her eyes filled with sadness as she thought about something. No, the people she failed to protect must be

reflected in her eyes. Seeing the wavering sorrow in Lefille's eyes, Suimei could feel the pain she was suffering.

“Everyone related to me are no longer of this world. So if you continue to be with me, you will be killed by Rajas or the Mazoku one day. I am tired of seeing people dying because of me. So—”

“Don't decide my future of being killed by Mazoku for me.”

“No, it's inevitable. Mazoku are powerful beings, not an existence that could be dealt with easily. And if things go badly, I will definitely abandon you. In order to preserve the powers of the spirits, I had to abandon everyone close to me and flee, I have enough of that already.”

“.....”

Suimei fell silent with a serious face. Lefille lowered her eyes and said with a pleading expression:

I know that I am being willful. But can you promise me this? After exiting the forest, we will go our separate ways. Please.”

“That's too hasty. I don't think I need to decide on an answer so early right?”

“Even if you say that—”

Just when Lefille was lowering her head because of what Suimei said.

Rustling sound could be heard from the bushes behind them.

“— Suimei-kun!”

“Yeah.”

Lefille whirled around while calling out a warning, and Suimei did the same in with a grunt. From behind they could sense a vague presence like that of a wandering spirit, was its identity a wild dog or jackals? Monsters or Mazoku?

Preparing for a possible assault, Suimei raised his alertness to the maximum. Instantly, the atmosphere grew tense as if it was filled with thorns. However, it was something that completely betrayed their expectations.

What came out of the bushes, was a heavily injured person.

"He--Help."

"...?!?"

"He, hey!"

The appearance of that unexpected person filled Suimei and Lefille were surprised. What appeared was a man dressed like an adventurer. With an unsteady gait, blank eyes, torn clothes with blood everywhere, his body was full of lacerations and burns. All that could be heard was a dying whisper and wheezing as faint as the wind.

Severely wounded, he came here like that. Because of the wounds his consciousness was fading. Lefille rushed up to him.

"Hang in there!"

"Ahh, gu... you..."

"What the hell happened?"

"The Mazoku... we came across them... in the mountains."

"Mountains? Mazoku?"

They only caught a couple of words from his speech. As Lefille's face turned grave, Suimei noticed something and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Hey. Lefille. This man."

"What about him?"

"He was an adventurer from that time."

"That time? Oh..."

She suddenly raised her voice in realization. Lefille must have also realized. Because of the numerous wounds and the excessive bleeding, she didn't notice at first, but it was the guard who was the loudest at the time when she was

kicked out of the caravan group.

Did he run all the way here alone after he was attacked by the Mazoku? Or did he come for help? It could be for either purpose, but regardless, it will be terrible leaving him like this.

Suimei gathered mana in his palms and gave instructions to Lefille.

"Lefille. Put him down. I'll use healing magic."

"Ahh. Understood."

Lefille hesitated for a moment, but understood the gravity of the situation and laid the man down onto the ground as per Suimei's instructions.

The girl who was walking an earnest path didn't seem to harbour any resentment.

"Please."

"Yeah."

To those words, Suimei nodded and started casting healing magic on the man. If he wasn't on the verge of death, his method should be able to heal him. For physical wounds, spirit magic was effective. Negative symptoms from the excessive loss of blood couldn't be avoided, but that could be cured with restorative magic too.

Under the adventurer was a magic formation of the same color as the magic coming from Suimei's hand. With a faintly rising emerald color, the adventurer's wound gradually closed up.

However.

"..."

At that point, Suimei stopped.

Halfway through treatment, Suimei silently looked at the adventurer and put down the hand supplying the treatment.

"Huh...?"

To that, Lefille was visibly bewildered. As far as she could tell, he had abandoned the treatment halfway through. To Suimei who had lowered his hand, Lefille raised her voice in urgency.

"Suimei-kun! What happened? Why did you stop?!?"

"...It's impossible. The Astral Body has been irreversibly exhausted. No matter how much we heal this man, it's useless."

Can't be done. Can't be cured. Impossible to heal. However, to Lefille who had just seen the wounds close, this explanation probably wouldn't make any sense.

Having seen the physical wounds heal, it was natural for Lefille to doubt this explanation.

"D-Didn't you see that? Weren't his wounds just healed? That doesn't seem meaningless. So why?..."

"The wounds did close. However..."

"Then..."

He should be able to be healed, is what she wanted him to say. But Suimei, with a bitter face while grinding his teeth, interrupted those words with a shake of his head.

Lefille who saw that had a face filled with questions.

"Why...?"

Lefille's disappointment was painful. A sense of helplessness was probably tumbling around in her heart. Even if the other person was someone she'd hated before, the bitterness Lefille felt wouldn't stop.

Lefille, however, was suspicious that Suimei had stopped for another reason.

"Suimei-kun. It can't be that you stopped treatment because this man was the one who kicked me out of the group? Don't look down on me. I don't care what happened back then. So hurry up and continue the treatment!"

"..."

"Suimei-kun!"

"It's no good. It's true that it's as Lefille saw, I can heal the wounds. However, it's also as I said. The astral body, in other words, the soul and its vessel, the psyche shell, has been worn away. No matter how much he is treated, he won't survive for long."

"What... it can't be..."

Watching the man whose life would disappear like fly, Lefille had no words. To her, Suimei regretfully added on.

"No matter how much he is treated, nothing can be done about another person's soul."

"...Is it really impossible?"

"Under the proper conditions, there might be a one in ten thousand chance that it can be done. However, we have no time for that. Even if we were to prepare for it right now, his body wouldn't be able to last."

"...Tch"

After hearing Suimei's diagnosis, Lefille bit her lips, her neck and shoulders slouched. No matter who it was, it was disheartening to see someone who was about to die. If the Mazoku was the cause of this, the feeling would be more

intense and suffocating for the girl who swore to fight the Mazoku.

... The two of them fell into sadness. The man then turned towards Lefille.

“T-The others... Are under attack, by the Mazoku.”

“There are survivors!?”

“Don’t... Know. But, maybe...”

“There might be someone who is still alive!?”

But there wasn’t any response to the girl’s query.

To get as much air into his lungs as possible, the adventurer dressed man gasped his lips desperately, and couldn’t even make a sound. Seeing him like this, Lefille seemed to have thought of something and asked quietly:

“... Are the others on the mountain?”

Was there any meaning to this question? The girl sounded too calm, it might even cause others to misunderstand that she was being cold. In reply to this question that might give others the chill, the man nodded slowly.

The next instant, the man stopped breathing.

“— Tch.”

“.....”

Lefille made an inhuman noise when the man died, while Suimei lowered his face.

... And finally, the kneeling Lefille stood and turned her back towards Suimei. The direction she was facing—

“... Hey, Lefille?”

Suimei asked, but Lefille kept her back towards him for some reason, and uttered words of apology.

“I am sorry, Suimei-kun.”

“Sorry about what, what are you going to do? Why are you facing that way?”

“Do you even need to ask...”

Isn't that obvious— No, it was indeed something anyone could work out. Because right now, she was facing in a direction of a road they had never taken before.

In the end, Lefille seemed to have made up her mind. She turned towards Suimei, and stated her resolve with determination.

“Suimei-kun, I will be rescuing the people from the caravan.”

“Rescue them? Are you serious?”

“Yes, I have no plans on making jokes.”

“You are going even though you don’t even know where exactly the caravan is!?”

“They are probably along the mountain path. Even if they deviate from the route, it wouldn’t be for too far.”

“But there was no way of telling if they are still alive!”

“That’s right. But someone might still be alive. That’s why—”

That’s why she was going, in order help them, and performed a rescue that could only be said to be reckless. However, she mustn’t, she absolutely mustn’t go there, because—

“Do you understand!? This is the trap of the Mazoku to lure you over!”

“A trap, huh?”

“Yes! They are a bunch that assault people without a second thought! Will they allow someone who is heavily injured to run away!? If you go, you will definitely find Rajas waiting for you!”

That’s correct, this is a trap. An evil trap to bait Lefille, with the knowledge that she will rush over to save the caravan. They allowed this man on the verge of death to escape because they knew how Lefille will react after meeting him.

It was a coincidence that this adventurer came to this place in the secluded forest, but the chances that he was released as bait was high. It wouldn't be a surprise to find Rajas waiting for Lefille when she rushed over to rescue the caravan.

However, Lefille didn't listen to what Suimei said, the girl answered in a calm tone.

"... Probably."

"What do you mean by probably... You should know this is true, Lefille!"

"Yes, that's true. It's like you said. I understand how reckless this is."

"In that case...!!"

"However!! ... Even so, I still want to save everyone! Because of me, everyone is in danger! All because of me! That's why!"

Lefille's emotions burst forth as she faced Suimei who couldn't accept her actions. It was probably the anxiety that had been accumulating in her heart all this while. Her feelings of wanting to help others and the thinking that she had to go were conveyed in her words. But she was just beating herself up too much over this.

"Like I told you, it's not Lefille's fault..."

"No, this is my fault. You said it just now right? This man only appeared here because of the trap the Mazoku laid out for me. Rajas only did this because I hid my tracks."

“That... But even if you go, you will just die in vain!”

That was the truth. The opponent’s ambush wasn’t something so simple. It was a plan made in mind for the enemy that would be coming. For the one who jumps in, it would definitely be at a disadvantage.

That’s why Suimei refuse to give in, and tried to talk Lefille, whose back was towards him, out of this.

“Lefille! Think over it carefully! Calm down and think it through!”

But Lefille didn’t turn back—

“Lefille!! Come back!! You know in your heart it’s true!”

“.....”

“Lefille!! Didn’t you say you mustn’t die!? To keep the power of the spirits from dying out! In that case—”

When Suimei was saying that, Lefille who was enduring silently spoke.

“What do you...”

“Hmm?”

“What do you understand about me!!”

“— Ugh!?”

The girl yelled from the bottom of her heart to stop Suimei. She then poured out the feelings in her heart like a torrent.

“You are telling me to pretend I didn’t see that even after all that!? I abandoned the people most dear to me! Even my closest family! Even so, you still want me to throw the people who got into danger because of me away!?”

Lefille’s words reverberated in Suimei’s ears and heart.

Is this thought and feelings weighing down her heart all this while? No one could help her from the pain, no one could save her. She couldn’t restrain her thoughts and screamed, because she earnestly wished to save these people. If that was so, what would Suimei have to do to calm her out of control emotions?

“So I just need to keep running!? Keep ignoring others and leave them to die!? Because I have to cherish my own life!? My thinking resulted in people losing their lives! This kind of thing... I have enough of this!”

Lefille seemed to be roaring at the mercilessness of the world. It was the cry of a girl who couldn’t vent all this while. That’s right, because she had been betraying her emotions, her self reproach became even more painful. It was even more so, if the feelings she had been going against was the right one. Because of her strong conviction, her self reproach was even more unbearable.

And then, tears came out from the corner of Lefille’s eyes after her emotions

burst forth.

The tears were filled with sorrow and suffering. It was the crystallization of a girl imprisoned by her responsibility and obligations.

... And finally, she calmed down and her breathing became steady. Lefille apologized for losing her composure and turned back once more. Without looking back, she bided farewell as if it was forever.

“... I am sorry, Suimei-kun. It was for a short time, but I have been in your care.”

“Lefille!? Don't go!! Wait!!”

The voice persuading her to stay didn't reach the girl, and disappeared futilely into the air. Lefille ignored Suimei's restraint, and started running with abnormal speed along the way they came with her crimson spirit powers.

“Hey. She really left...”

The mutters of Suimei who was left behind echoed in the forest. His voice couldn't reach Lefille anymore.

He halted his legs chasing her, and lowered his outreached arm. Suimei stood stiffly on the spot.

She left just like that, to help those who cursed and chased her away. And also to forge ahead in the path she believes to be just.

“Tch...”

This fact made Suimei grit his teeth.

Was it fine for her to go like this? To a battle alone, where only despair waits.

Then chase her, Suimei thought. But if he went too, his life would be endangered. And of course, he would need to fight that Mazoku Rajas and his minions. It would be a brutal fight, and he might even die.

But he mustn't die, He had his reasons. Suimei had to fulfill his father's wish, and realize the ideal of the Association. He had already sworn to do so. Even if the one who made him swear was no longer amongst the living, even if this was decided one sidedly, an oath was still an oath. Once decided, he won't give up until he fulfilled the promise. But would things be fine like this? If he accepted this, and use the excuse that he had things he needed to accomplish, he could move on and walk on his safe route. Could he ignore the battle that would be breaking out soon? And leave the girl to walk the path without salvation?

That's right—

— The topic of his research was to save those who couldn't find salvation. If he abandoned someone like that so he could continue his research, wouldn't that be putting the cart before the horse?

He saw the contradiction in his introspection, and that voice echoed in his mind.

When did he start fearing death so much? When did he start to fear the unknown, and hesitate in stepping forward? When did he become so weak and cowardly, like those without power?

And so, he thought about it carefully. What was the power he possessed. He had been working hard to learn magic that surpass all the powerful mages since he was young. Didn't the mystic exist in order to solve all the problems in the world? Wasn't this the power that existed in order to not leave anyone who couldn't reach salvation behind?

... The dilemma in his heart was wavering. But he arrived at this only answer a bit late. No, this only truth. Even though his heart was in conflict, the alarm in his head kept ringing. He wanted to put his own plans, victory, and defeat onto a scale and weigh them. But—

— It was for this reason that he swore an oath on that day.

“That's right, Yakagi Suimei, you are a mage of the Association. As a mage, going against the ideals you decided on is wrong...”

He was talking to himself, as if he wanted to stop his thoughts from freezing up, a ritual to return his goal back into his heart.

And at this moment, something new happened.

“.....”

Closing his mouth shut, Suimei's eyes turned cold and sharp.

There was the presence of someone standing up from behind him. With a corrupt aura like those of a Mazoku, it walked towards him like a ghost. Something that didn't show any signs of life was suddenly filled with vigour and ferociousness.

— So this was why the healing magic didn't work well...

This revealed the mystery of the body behind Suimei. The reason why the Astral body was damaged so unnaturally. It was impossible to exhaust the Astral body through normal physical attacks. Even a lethal attack wouldn't diminish the volume of an Astral body. The power of one's psyche would be weakened if one was injured, but that would just make the psyche more frail, but won't damage the soul.

Hence, the adventurer suffered attacks in addition to the external injuries he had. In the beginning, he didn't know the Astral body was harmed because of an attack that was effective against the soul, or because if it was damage due to corrosion of the soul. It was undoubtedly the latter this time.

This must be a trap for the careless Lefille.

“— All of this.”

“Warrghhhh!!”

Behind Suimei who was thinking about chasing the girl who shed tears of suffering due to her self reproach, the walking dead was approaching.

Running. Yes, she was running with all her might. Not stopping even when her legs start to hurt. Just the fact that there was someone waiting for her made Lefille run alone back the path she came as fast as she could.

Tapping into the extraordinary powers in her body, Lefille relied on the glowing crimson blessing of the goddess and ran. Going through the forest she broke the branches forcefully, and ran as if she was crushing the earth under her feet. Even when images of the worst case scenario flashes in her mind, she didn't give up on the possibility of the people waiting for her was still there.

When she was almost halfway up the hill, the girl stopped and looked back.

“.....”

She should only be able to see the cloudy, gloomy sky, and unnatural noises made by the branches, which made the atmosphere even more eerie— But reflected in her eyes were something that appeared on her path here suddenly.

That's right, there were countless bodies paving the path she came. The remains of the Mazoku blocking the way of the girl going to the people waiting for her.

In order to kill Lefille, the Demon General Rajas probably gathered all his lackeys in the vicinity. If she arrived later by a quarter of an hour or so, the forest and hills in a 10 mile radius would be flooded by the Mazoku. It would be impossible to escape then.

Rajas was probably in the area too.

That thing who took everyone precious to Lefille, making people she cherished suffer in death. He even extended his claws to people unrelated to her. That merciless thing was waiting there eagerly.

As if making humans suffer was the only thing he took joy in. That evil being was probably sneering there.

Voices that Lefille shouldn't be able to hear reached her. They were asking her to save them, begging for salvation. It was the voices of the people she couldn't save, even though she hears their pleas.

That's why she couldn't leave it alone, in order to avoid that tragedy again.

Lefille acknowledged the burning fury in her heart, and at this moment.

— Don't go! Lefille!

“Ah...”

Suddenly, the remnants of her memory resounded in her ears. The voices she shouldn't be able to hear again, made her heart burned by wrath waver.

That voice grasped her heart tightly, and the girl couldn't suppress her memories that flowed out. Something important seemed to be glimmering in her heart, a sense of lost she wanted to ignore still lingered.

That's right, the one who stopped Lefille, whose abilities was beyond human. The incredible young man she was just getting familiar with who restrained her

from running off. His name is Yakagi Suimei. She met him in Mehter, the capital of Astel. A mage who was a bit weird.

Aside from his black hair which was a rare sight in this region, he didn't have any other features, a young man who looked as if he will disappear into the wind at any moment. If she had to list one thing unique about him, that would be his gentle eyes. Although he wore clothings that wasn't any different from others, he still had an exotic feel about him. No, the aura about him couldn't be described so simply with words. He was a mage unlike any other the girl had seen before.

He claimed to be a traveler making his way to Nelferia, but he was unfamiliar with the common sense of this world for some reason. Recently, she found out he possessed exceptional and shocking knowledge.

Simply put, his personality was warm and kind. As a mage, he should be lofty and reserved, but his actions and words felt naive in all sorts of ways, and his character was far from being cold.

That day, when he parted with the caravan and chased after Lefille, it was easy to deduce that was how his personality was. He would definitely be in danger if he followed her, but Suimei still did that without any regret. He always has her best interest in heart, and even brushed off Lefille's words asking him to stop, and soothe her heart tired from all her setbacks. That was why she could more or less grasp his character.

And that wasn't the only part of his character she grasped.

That night when the curse from the Mazoku activated, he gently embraced Lefille despite her shameful actions.

That's right. Back then I was—

— Yes, she was fearful back then.

She felt the young man who noticed something was wrong and came to her was scary.

No matter how kind and gentle he was, he was still a man. If he saw how she was and that she was doing something shameful, there was no telling what he would do to her.

The instant his arms embraced her, her heart was filled with fear towards the young boy who was worried about her and wanted to help.

In the end, Lefille saw the emotions in his eyes were opposite of the fear she felt, and didn't have a shred of violence.

In his eyes were the light of sympathy and empathy. Normally, he should feel that her shameful appearance was disgusting. But despite that, his hands that touched her back then were so gentle. He didn't lose his head to his base desires that would stem naturally. The hands touching her skin were trembling silently because of his anger towards the curse.

She groaned to his touch, and when she realized it, she heard his apologies for not being of use. It was a weak and depressed voice, lamenting his incompetence in breaking the curse.

He had no obligation to undo the curse in the first place, and didn't need to apologize. But even so, he still apologized as if he was to blame.

And when the time came for their abrupt farewell, what he said was words of restraint for her sake. His actions done for her safety had no chance of being malicious.

“Suimei-kun...”

That's why it's fine now. Because of the way he was, Lefille didn't want him to encounter any more danger. His figure shouldn't be around her, the one who could only head down the path of destruction.

If he could just hide in the forest obediently, it would be over soon. She might defeat Rajas, or pass on vexingly in Rajas' hands, it would be over soon.

That's right, there was nothing that would please her more than him being safe.

— Even if she couldn't see his cheerful smile ever again.

Even if his voice that tried to stop her echoed in her ears.

Even if the last expression she saw on his face was a mixture of sadness and anxiety.

She knew that her choice was just hopeless wilfulness. All that talk about helping those who abandoned her, was a form of betrayal to the feelings of the

one who came to help her alone despite without hesitation. A girl like her had no value in being saved.

But even so, even if things were like this—

“This is fine. This is...”

She found it hard to hold back the tears welling up, it was a warmth that welled up like a tide from the innermost depths of her heart. It was filled with sorrow and anguish, the pain of having no choice but to bear such a fate. If she could meet that young man in another way, she wouldn't have such an ending? When he followed her, when he chatted with her while enduring with the awkwardness, when he tried to stop her from going. She felt so happy during each of these moments.

That's why emotions she never felt before spilled forth when she reminiscence those times. It wasn't the sadness of a cherished person passing on, or the sorrow of missing a home that was already gone. It was a pain that gripped at her heart, her reluctance to part with him.

But she didn't want to run anymore. She didn't want to see anyone else die. Being helpless while someone besides her was being tormented, she had enough of such things.

“...Ugh.”

That's why, she wiped away the warm thoughts falling from the corner of her eyes away, and ran with all her might.

Cleaving through the things that were in her way, Lefille finally reach this place.

If she focused on her senses, she could detect the presence of multiple humans and Mazoku. She could already sense the strange atmosphere of this place from the depth of the forest, and Lefille cut through everything blocking her path and dashed out.

It was an open plain where the vegetation growth seemed unnatural. It was almost dusk, but the air was still heavy as she took in the scene before her eyes — A terrible hell.

“——Tch!?”

The first thing that assaulted Lefille who gave a prayer for having made it in time as she cleave through the trees and dash out, was the mind numbing smell of blood and gore. And the reason behind the bloody smell appeared in her clear eyes. It made her doubt if she had stumbled onto an execution site.

Are these Rajas' minions? Several Mazoku covered in dark demonic aura was rampaging. Some of the people were busy running for their lives, while others were covered in wounds and lying in a pool of blood, probably dead from the Mazoku's attacks. Admist the chaos, roars, wails and screeching laughter could be heard.

This scene Lefille witnessed before and didn't want to ever see again filled her with rage.

“Ohhhhh!”

Allowing her emotions to drive her body, Lefille slashed at the Mazoku besides her.

The Mazoku couldn't react in time to Lefille's sudden attack.

The vertical slash that glowed with a crimson glow. Dirt and the death throes of the Mazoku were blown away by her large sword, sending the Mazoku flying in two pieces.

Be it the struggling survivors or the Mazoku that far outnumbered them, all their eyes fell on her. In order to confirm what was happening, everyone watched the interloper who finally arrived after much hardship.

One of them noticed.

"I-It's you!"

It wasn't a question asking who the young girl was, but an exclamation because he found someone familiar.

She wasn't too late, there were still survivors. There were still people surrounded by Mazoku, waiting for rescue. People who resisting death in a hopeless situation.

Yes, she made it. In order to protect those hoping for a miracle.

The girl came to help them, in response to their pleas. That should be the case

but—

“Why the hell are you here!?”

What greeted her was the merciless voice of rage.

“Wha...?|

Her movement turned stiff because of the sudden hostility and disgust. Why was she treated with such ill meaning words even though she ran here because everyone was in danger.

“Ms Grakis...”

It was a voice that came from another place. The low tone voice came from a middle aged man, the caravan leader Galeo. He only survived this long because he was a merchant not involved in the fighting. But his voice was trembling with rage. His eyes were filled with hate directed at Lefille. Those eyes seemed to be saying the culprit was right there.

“Mr Galeo...”

“Didn’t I tell you to leave the caravan? The Mazoku attacked because you are here.”

“T-That might be so, but now isn’t the time to talk about that...”

That's right. Right now, they were on the verge of falling to the Mazoku's attack. Such meaningless talk should be saved for later, this wasn't a safe place to talk.

But contrary to Lefille's thinking, the people around her replied.

"Meaningless talks...? Isn't this why we got attacked by the Mazoku!?"

"Ugh..."

Lefille didn't have any grounds to address the accusation. It was her fault that the Mazoku was here, so the girl could only endure these cruel words.

As Lefille kept the Mazoku at bay while taking the unreasonable outburst she couldn't deny, the bloody faced man who shouted at the beginning showed a surprised expression.

"Wait... You, why do you know we are being attacked?"

"One of the adventurers escorting the caravan told me about the attack, so..."

"You say he told you... You mean he somehow found you even though he didn't know where you were?"

"Yes."

Lefille nodded, and the escort pressed on:

“How did you come here so fast?”

“I told you now is not the time to talk about this—”

Lefille reminded him, but the escort ignored her.

“Answer me.”

“Ughh...”

Escort didn't leave any room for negotiation and the air was tense. It made the ghastly aura about his bloody body even more eerie. But why was this happening? They should know the urgency of the matter, why were they bothering with such trivial details?

Oh no...

This is bad, we have to strengthen our defences, Lefille thought. Her concentration was disrupted because of the conversation. But when she shut her mouth and surveyed the surroundings, she saw that the Mazokus were sneering.

They were like bystanders watching an ugly internal discord.

Wha...?

Why didn't the Mazoku showed any signs of attacking?

Why didn't they attack everyone? The insidious laughter sent a chill through Lefille's body. If they want to kill the caravan off, now would be the best chance to do that, so why did they stop their bloodied claws? A strange atmosphere hanged in the air. This was a matter of life and death, so why did they ignore this point, and insist on acting out such a poorly scripted drama?

"Hey, are you listening!?"

Just when Lefille was baffled by this situation, the escort suddenly shouted at her.

"— Tch!! That doesn't matter!! Regroup now and escape!!"

"Escape? Where can we run to!? There's Mazoku everywhere here! Anything we do will be futile!"

"That might be so... But if we talk so defenselessly..."

"Don't try to hide it."

"—I'm not hiding anything!"

"... You don't want to tell us. Am I right?"

"What—!?"

“You don’t dare to tell us the truth!! You have been loitering around us all this while! That’s why you can make it here so fast! Isn’t it!?”

That’s that true. She used the power of the spirits in the forest and rushed here from far away. She wasn’t in the vicinity. But how should she explain. There wasn’t any use in saying them—

“That’s why we were attacked right!? Because you didn’t leave and is just in the area, so we were attacked!”

“No! That’s not true!”

“Not true!? If not, how did you get here so fast!?”

“Ughh...”

So that’s why he was so furious. An indescribable resentment assaulted her. Following that, she was showered by grudgeful gazes.

Do they really want to push the blame onto me so much? Humans who were on the verge of death will vent their negative emotions at others arbitrary. That’s how much of a failure the creature known as man was.

“Ms Grakis, because of you...”

“I...”

As if she was being punched repeatedly, the impact of the accusations made the girl shake her head.

These baseless rumours pushing all the responsibility onto her gave Lefille the illusion that the world was spinning around her. Hostility and censure robbed her of her balance.

Why are they blaming me. Why must they curse and swear in a place like this. I came for the sake of everyone. Even though I am risking my life in this godforsaken place to save everyone.

Even though she did this for everyone, and even rejected the gentle hands of that young man—

“Why... I am here to save everyone...”

“Shut up! It’s all your fault! We only encounter such a thing because of you!!”

“I-I am...”

The accusations and swearings were like a curse. Isn’t there any exception, does everyone think it’s my fault? Lefille only came here in the hope that everyone was safe, but she still had to endure their loathe and curses.

The swearing from everyone tumbled in the girl’s head, when a painful roar erupted.

Shifting her gaze to the origin of the sound, Lefille saw an arm as thick as a log

protruding out of a chest of one of the escort. That was definitely an arm of a Mazoku.

The escort was killed by this piercing blow and fell limp forward. Appearing behind him was—

“You are finally here, Swordswoman of Noshias.”

“—、Rajas!! You bastard!!”

“You are overbearing as usual. What, you are that eager to take my head?”

Her killing intent was directed at Rajas who was mocking her. There wasn't anything else to say, wasn't this obvious? Because this bastard who was an incarnation of destruction and violence took everything important from her. Without a doubt, her hostility and murderous urge was pointed at him. Yes, because of this rage—

“It's all your fault, you... you did all of this!”

Because of the tragedy happening before her once again, she couldn't suppress her emotions anymore. These words spilled forth because of her intense emotions. But it wasn't clear how Rajas interpret her feelings, as he looked around him and laughed deviously as if he was waiting for these very words.

“What are you saying, this is your fault, woman of Noshias. These bunch of people only meet with misfortune because you are here, right?”

Rajas smiled sinisterly, as if he was anticipating something. It was true that Lefille was part of the reason, but Rajas who created this mess was definitely not qualified to say this.

But Rajas was sneering. Looking at the group behind Lefille as if he was watching fools.

Ah—

When Lefille realized why Rajas said that, it was already too late.

The gaze of the group stung her back. When she noticed it and turned back, all of them were glaring at her wrathfully.

“So it is because of you...”

“I-If you are not here...”

“It’s all your fault...”

Those weren’t sounds of humans anymore. What came out of their mouth seemed to be the congregation of hate filled with malice.

The words of denial came out of her mouth unconsciously.

“N-No! Listen to me, it’s not like this!”

“Shut up! You bitch! You are the source of all evil!”

The survivors started swearing at her. When she realized it, even the calm Mr Galeo was also cursing at her. Hatred poured down at her from all sides.

Why didn't they trust her who came forth to help them, but side with the devil? They should realize something was off if they think about it a little. Why were they blinded by the words and sights in front of them, and fail to see the true nature of things—

“... No, it's not my fault! I didn't want anyone to get hurt...”

Shut up. It's all your fault. It's because of you. Because you are here. The Mazoku said so too. Murderer. Death god.

The voices that entered her ears kept blaming her and made it her fault.

“I-I'm not wrong!! Why, why can't everyone understand!?”

Lefille screamed with all her might. Maybe this was the emotions she had been suppressing in her heart. Rajas who saw this scene laughed heartily.

“Fuhahah! You humans are so dumb! When something happens, you only know how to curse, swear and demean others! After peeling away the exterior, you are beings that are uglier than maggots!”

After enjoying this happiness, Rajas turned to the Mazoku around him—

“— Do it”

He ordered the massacre.

“—Tch!!”

His words made her heart that was wounded by the accusations strengthen. Even though her face was wet with her vexed and painful tears, she endured it and gritted her teeth.

Lefille won't let him do as he pleased. As she was thinking that—

“Huh—?”

Even though her heart took a step forward, Lefille's body did not respond. Her power that allowed her to run and leap was not conveyed to her legs, her usual swiftness was gone. Her feet weren't moving as well as she imagined.

Her movement dulled. There wasn't any doubt that she had slowed down.

As for the reason, it's because of the gaze of the crowd that made her unable to move. Yes, it wasn't from Rajas or the Mazoku around her, but because of her fellow humans. Their accusations bounded her.

And her dulled movement had fatal consequences.

“Ughhh!”

“Ah, ah ah! Ahhhh!”

“I don’t want to die! I don’t want to die! Ah, ah, ah—!”

“Don’t come! Don’t come here! Don’t ahhhhhh— Ughh!?”

The people around her were slaughtered by the Mazoku helplessly. Be it the escort that blamed her, the adventurers that swore at her, Galeo who glared at her with hatred or the other merchants.

When the Mazoku attacked the last person, her body finally recovers.

It was too late. Even though her head knows that, her heart refused to stop.

Cleaving through the back of the Mazoku who was blocking her view of the last person, she looked down. On the ground was a person dyed red with the blood of the Mazoku and her own blood.

It was a girl. When she took the request at the guild, she was a mage in the monster subjugation team. The one closest to her in the group, someone she think of as a friend—

Lefille knelt down and held the girl.

“Be strong!”

“Ah, ugh...”

The girl groaned in pain. And reached a trembling hand turned red by her blood to Lefille. She uttered these words between her soft gasping breathes.

“... If... you...”

“Huh...?”

“If only...you weren't here...”

“__”

In the end, she died after muttering words akin to a curse. She left behind a bloody mark around Lefille's neck with both of her hands, and a corpse that had nothing to do with the term 'RIP in peace'. Reflected in Lefille's eyes was a face twisted with hatred. As if Lefille was her mortal enemy, and in the last moment of her life, she vented her grudge and curses at Lefille.

... Lefille's arms and shoulders that were holding her fell weakly.

At the same time, a cracking voice shattered everything she believed in.

Chapter 4 - That shining back is burning bright above all



— Father was a quiet man.

I could vividly remember him every time I closed my eyes. He did not get easily excited and was like a man devoid of emotions, simply sitting on his wheelchair like a statue: Yakagi Kazamitsu.

He simply sat on the rocking chair by veranda and looked out at the endless sky beyond the window.

He was the best magician of the eastern world. He was the very epitome of “silent” and rarely spoke. He stood by the saying that words have consequences — but the relationship between me and my father, even if you excluded the fact we were a magician family, were far from normal.

We had small, everyday conversations but never anything deep. Only thing that was close to a deep conversation was when he was teaching me magic.

After teaching the mysteries of magic. After teaching the attitude of a magician. And then, only then, did he speak as if he remembered all the passion he had forgotten somewhere in life about the philosophy of the Association: To establish the research topic that the leader of the Association spoke of.

There lied what he sought after. He spoke of it it like a habit: to seek out the mystery and realize one’s potential.

If anyone else heard it, they would think it’s some child’s wild dreams.

I thought so too when I was young. When my father enthusiastically spoke of the philosophy of the Association, I asked why he clung onto something like that. He remembered the days he could never return to and spoke of it only once.

— He had a woman he wanted to protect.

She was a woman who was cursed with the curse of destruction. A woman who went hand in hand with cold rain and sadness filled with pain. A woman who couldn't blossom in both light and the dark. She was a pitiable woman who was shunned by others for her fate to meet an unhappy end and lived in a hellish state of no one even glancing at her way.

She was always beside father and always cried in his arms. Father said even he had seen her truly smile only once. He said even the smile on her last moment was her trying to console him. He had promised to protect her until the end, but couldn't keep that promise.

— I couldn't protect your mother.

That's what my father said before he passed away. In the last moments of subjugating a dragon which revived. While pressing down on the wound he received from protecting me as he was about to deliver the final blow to the dragon. Why was he telling this story just now? There were plenty of opportunities before. Why did he keep that story all wrapped up to himself. Keeping it secret even to his only child.

When I asked that, he replied.

He didn't want to burden me with it.

I was a child born between an unlucky woman and a foolish man. From the moment I was born, a relationship with a cursed person was forced on me. If he

talked about it, I would chase after the Research Topic like he did, and would walk down the path of hopelessness just as he did.

That was why he didn't talk about it.

Then why was he saying it now? Did he have a change of heart and wanted to come clean with everything? Why did he swear never to reveal the secret, yet told me all about it just then?

It was a question that didn't need an answer. It was because he suddenly became talkative while on the death's doorstep. More than he had ever spoken. Even more so than when he taught me magic.

Was his sigh born out of self-deprecation of the hopeless path he had trodden thus far? Or did he simply feel pitiful at his talkative self?

After his sigh, he said something that didn't suit him.

— That he still had regrets. It didn't matter if his body rotted and disappeared from the face of the earth, but the memories of the dreams he shared with her, the emotions they shared, he didn't want it to all disappear along with his body.

His feelings never reached their fruition, and it was a path filled with pain and worries. Even then — he wanted at least me to remember them. That there was a man like him and a woman like her. That they had dreams together. That there were days they walked together in pursuit of their happy future.

It was out of nowhere. Also, what was I supposed to do when he confessed his feelings like that in here of all places? There was only one answer I could

give him.

Yea, there was no choice. I was a magician just like my father was.

But — what he said lingered around me.

“— Suimei, if there was anything I’ve chosen in my life, it was magic and Shizuma. Now, I have only you to rely on. So I implore you. Find the Association’s philosophy. If the truth the leader seek really exist, then there is no one who can’t be saved in this world. So —”

— Save the women who cannot be saved in my place.

After leaving behind the word “Sorry”, the man who dreamt of a happy future with his family passed away. Without even listening to my replies.

As if he already spoke everything he wanted to say. Like a real statue this time. The dreams he had imagined in the sky just beyond the window. Without ever being able to see the happy family he had hoped for.

He was willful. He forced me on an abnormal path, a dangerous path. And to preach such a happy dream to me.

It all felt abrupt.

So that’s why. That was why I shouted at the dragon that was letting out its last roar.

— I will achieve your dreams. At any cost.

... Yes, there was a day like that. The day I howled at the grief of losing my father. The oath I shouted back then. I never once felt my actions were wrong since then. Thus, after chasing the mystery, here I was.

To walk towards the end of the path and prove that there was nobody who cannot be saved.

It was a childish dream. It wasn't realistic and there was no feasible chance of reaching the end of the path. It was more faint than looking for a slightest outline of a figure in thick morning fog. But I wanted to achieve that dream. It was a dream that I wanted to achieve.

Science and magic. Regardless of the discipline, the wisdom that is said to lie at the end after solving the laws of nature: the Akashic Records.

Past, present, future and the astral plane as well. The record which contains everything. If a happy future for those who could not be saved was written down, then they could be saved. The leader's philosophy to pursue happiness for all. If someone could find the record, it would validate that the path those two had trodden on was not pointless.

The oath like confession now was a vow.

“.... Father, the words you left behind might have been a curse binding my future. But I am your son and a magician. I want to see what you chased after. So —”

Just like you, I will go to save those who could not be saved. I will save them no matter what. In this world as well as that world.

I closed my eyes and slowly chewed on my oath. Never forget. I steeled my resolve once again. I will save her. I will save that girl crying from the misfortune she has to carry with her.

When I opened my eyes, a disgusting desert filled my sight. Just glancing at those creatures filled with evil and malice was enough to make me feel disgusted. They were swarming like maggots on a piece of rotten carcass.

It was a funny situation. I made all that ruckus back in the castle because I didn't want to run into something like this. Now here they were. What a cruel irony.

“Hmph.”

I blew away any sense of self-deprecation with that snort. I remembered what Rajas said to Lefille and glanced left and right furiously. They were probably that thing's subordinates. How many of them were there? Thousand? Ten Thousand? It was no use thinking about it now, but I didn't like how many of them there were.

Suimei took a step forward towards the sea of monstrosities.

They probably noticed his movement as the mazokus rushed to attack. Creatures that were touched by the breath from the god of death which preys on this world from outer realm. They were minions befitting it. Possessing neither mana, nor qi, nor astral body, they were abnormal and irregular

creatures that possessed black aura-like power.

“Ha...”

It was annoying. What was a mazoku? They were creatures principally opposite to human in fantasy setting like a game or a novel. Why do I, a modern magician, need to fight something that comes out in a fairy tale? It was annoying. The philosophy of the Association. The dream father chased after. Why am I fighting a Demon King hell bent on destroying the world instead of chasing after my small dream—.

That’s right. My other deep inside self came to a realization and looked at me with its cold eyes. Ahh... I was sick of it. Sick of it all.

Mazokus bared their claws and charged at Suimei even as he closed my eyes and sighed. They simply rushed forward like a charging boar, as if they knew nothing about fighting.

“Ex hoc loco evanescent.” (Return to dust.)

With a chant, a lightning bolt streak past the body of the Mazoku. All that’s left was a blue magic circle and a magical symbol. The mazoku flew back along with its now amputated arm, and Suimei didn’t even look at these shattered pieces.

Suimei could feel a cold psychic aura from inside the wall of bodies and focused in that direction, and increased his powers. Were they trying to cast some sort of magic? The spell bore some resemblance to the evil cult that worship the evil god of Solomon’s 72 pillar, as they transformed their black aura

into fireballs.

The flame flew relentlessly. Needless to say, it was headed for Suimei.

But it was slow. Compared to a HEAT round fired from a tank, it was slow in comparison. Even at a glance, by the time the flame took shape and flew over, Suimei could have cast three spells.

He didn't even bother looking at the fireball and sidestepped. The fireball simply passed on by.

Its firepower wasn't great either. If Suimei really wanted to defend, he could have casted a spell that could block a stream of metal jet travelling at mach 20 that would pierce any armour. So there was no need to worry about some mediocre explosion behind me. He only needed to look forward.

Even if there was a mazoku attacking from air, there was no reason to let it pass by him.

“Et cadens in terram.” (He shall fall to the ground)

A single phrase. His right feet, which was imbued to the limit with mana, stepped on mazokus that were stuck flat on the ground without any heed. They were weak. Suimei thought there was something wrong with himself to consider them a threat. If you knew how to fight, this was how things were. They were even less of a tripping hazard than a small pebble.

Suimei was a fool. He was a fool, but he couldn't stop. He couldn't stop because he promised.

“I —”

— I decided to break out. Through this road.

— That’s what I decided. I will follow this path.

Even if I fall or tumble, I will never give up this route. I resolved myself there.

To prove that it’s possible to save someone if you wanted to save them. To reach the Akashic Records and realizing father’s dream. My father’s and my dream.

It was foolish to simply cut through the middle of mazoku army. But this path definitely lead there.

“—Archiatius overload.” (Mana furnace overdrive)

With the spell, what appeared at the tip of his feet was rainbow coloured magic circle. What was its diameter? A magic circle roughly five meters in diameter containing complex pattern of numbers and letters awakened as if it had been waiting.

And the mana that was released. The mana source rotated with exploding sound at furious pace when the core overloaded. There was enough mana to cause lightings and they sent out shockwaves all over the place. Furious tornado struck, ground exploded and the mazoku’s fence flew high into the air.

The ground shook and groaned. The scenery of everything in the vicinity being shattered and turning into dust was a masterpiece. Once the mana overdrive

stopped, the abnormal creatures gathered like a cloud and charged once again like an avalanche.

Suimei shook off the dust on his coat from the mana whirlwind. The mazokus in front of him still filled the plain. Funnily enough, he remembered was what his father said.

“A hopeless path huh.... Fufu— Just the way I like it!”

In front of the swarm of those abominable creatures, Suimei spat out those words.

He didn't care about the Demon King. He didn't care about going back to my world for now. Suimei just didn't want to give up protecting that girl.

“Hyaaaaat!”

Was that sharp voice the shout to resolve her fighting spirit or the despair of a girl fighting against futility?

Lefille carried her outburst of emotion onto her honed sword and delivered a flare like attack to Demon General Rajas.

The strike created glowing crimson mana wind. Mana wind would normally cut through the earth, the mountain, the sky, without discriminating the size of the target. However, Rajas simply blocked the attack with his dark aura surrounded arm.

The power of the spirit which had exterminated countless mazokus and monsters thus far couldn't even scratch his skin and the aura was enough to deflect the attack. It was as if Rajas himself was saying that kind of power was laughable.

“Kuuuh...ugh!”

“Hahaha!! What's the matter, swordsman of Noshias? Is that the best you can do?”

“Shut uuupppp!!!”

She replied his ridicules with a scream. What she struck next with was another crimson strike, the 'May Rain'. Rajas countered the wild yet regulated strike directly with his ominous aura-filled fist.

Red lines collided with dark lines and retracted. It was a clash of strength. The ground both party stood on could not withstand the power and cracked with each exchange between the sword and the fist.

Lefille was losing. If Lefille and Rajas' strength could be put on scale, it would lean towards Rajas. If she retreated a single step, he would advance two steps and if she swung ten times, he would counter eleven times.

Whatever she did, she couldn't win against Rajas. The number of wounds on her body only grew.

“Hyyaaap!!”

Amidst flurry of attacks, Rajas prepared to launch a massive strike to finish the fight. She noticed it — but her body didn't listen. Normally, she could deliver five strikes while the opponent was preparing for such a cumbersome attack, but because of the injuries to her hand, even a single strike was difficult. She barely withstood Rajas' fist using the giant sword as a shield.

She groaned at the shockwave that bore through her body and retreated.

“Kuuuh.....”

When she knelt on the ground and breathed harshly, Rajas spoke with a mocking laughter.

“Kukuku. This is just like the repeat from that time”

“.... repeat?”

“Yes. Repeat from when we attacked your home. Just like that time...”

She could remember her home when he spoke of it. Just as Rajas said, the day when mazokus invaded Noshias. She could never forget that sight. While battling the endless tide of mazokus, what appeared amongst a sea of minions was Rajas. With immense strength standing above any mazoku, it destroyed everything in its path.

In the face of overwhelming strength, she knelt just like now.

Blaming herself for not being strong enough while watching her comrades get mercilessly slaughtered before her eyes. After that, she fought him multiple times at different places and time until the capital fell, but the results were only repeated.

At the end of every battle was her kneeling and someone sacrificing themselves to save her. Comrades and friends. It was always someone precious to her.

They sacrificed themselves protecting her, someone who lost to mazokus.

“Uuh, uggh....”

When she was moaning from the resurfacing memories, Rajas raised a corner of his mouth.

“Isn’t that right? You cannot win against me with your strength.”

She couldn’t win. It stuck to her heart. It was already proved. It was the fact. Merciless words that denied everything she stood for. It was like a sound of distant thunder. It was loud and noisy like a coming thunder cloud. Rajas’ voice was the same. Loud miscellaneous noise buzzed in her heart.

“Shut, up....”

“Do you feel scorned? Seems like I’ve nailed it on the spot. — But you, you ran everytime. Even though you claimed that you would protect your people and comrades so loudly, you showed your back to us many times. You always refused to fight to the end.”

“Shut up... SHUT UP.....! Shut your damned mouth!”

“Shut my mouth? So you want to hear nothing of your cowardice? Seems like you’re not proud of it. Kuku — I suppose everyone wants to hide their shame. You don’t want others to see it. You don’t want others to criticize you for it. Especially so since you know what a shame it is. But didn’t you abandon those who went to their death? Didn’t you run because you wanted to save your own precious life? Is anything I said wrong?”

She wanted to smash that smug smile and attitude as if he saw through everything. He knew nothing. Nothing about her, who had to crush her heart many times due to her fate. Nothing about those who sacrificed themselves to protect her. Nothing about the emotions involved. Knowing nothing.

“Do you know what happened to every human after you escaped Noshias?”

“W, what are you talking about...?”

“Your comrades, your friends and your family. I’m talking about those who risked their lives to smuggle you out. In the end, they suffered.”

“What did you do to them.....”

“What did I do? I ripped off their limbs and played with them slowly until they died! I remember it being fun. They tried to sacrifice their lives for something they believed in, but they all screamed in pain, fear and eventually cursed your precious goddess. Well, they didn’t show much reaction at the beginning, so it was somewhat boring. Ku-hahahahah!!!!”

“—!”

His laughter shredded her heart. Scenes played out in her mind that appeared and disappeared as Rajas spoke. It was the sight of those who met an agonizing end. How painful would it have been? How much would they have put up with? How much did they despair? The empty eyes of those who had died for her gazed at her. Voices of the phantoms that doesn't exist seeped into her heart.

“Nonsense... father... everyone...”

“Do you see now? Do you see what happened in your home and the pitiful end of your beloved ones? Hahahahah!”

“How dare you... how dare...!!”

“Are you angry? Are you unable to contain your anger? Swordman of Noshias, this is your punishment. It is a fitting punishment for running away every time.”

“UAAAAAAAAARRRGHH!!”

She rushed at Rajas who was saying that she was the cause of it all. It was a strike with all her spirit. It was an attack without a form nor balance. It was almost a foolish frontal strike that lost all shape due to rage and chaotic emotions.

“How boring.”

But it was deflected. Rajas' fist deflected the sword and more mocking words flew her way. Everything was insufficient. Her sword. Her emotions. Her shouts. Everything.

“Kuugh!”

But it wasn't over yet. It was when she clenched her teeth to deliver another strike.

“—”

With a sneering voice, aura that had been circulating in Rajas' hand quickly expanded.

— It was

“Uuu....uuu...”

Despair that seem to sap the strength from her entire body revived.

The scene she had watched multiple times from Rajas' hand passed in her mind like a phantasmagoria. Her spirit, which had been driven by rage up until this point collapsed. This was that magic. The reason why Rajas was called the “Demon Chief”. It was Rajas' ultimate magic that disintegrated a fortress without a trace in a middle of battle from that time.

A crimson coagulated mass expanded to form a bead big enough to swallow a grown man — and maintained its form. It stopped momentarily like a calm

ocean before a storm, and started to shake as if it was the signal for its release.

There was no way to dodge it. It was powerful enough to destroy an entire fortress. It was not an attack one could dodge due to its wide area of effect. Only thing she could do was draw as much power from the spirit to protect herself.

— and a dark tidal wave swallowed her whole.

“Uuu aaaaahhhh!!”

Ominous dark energy surrounded her. It felt everything was being destroyed. It felt everything was being taken away. Amidst darkness that seem to prophesize the end, all five senses went away.

... And after what felt like an eternity, everything around her was gone. Trees, rocks, the adventurer's corpses, that girl's corpse, everything.

“Ah, ugh...huk...!”

She could withstand the attack. But what's left was only her battered body after having spent all her strength. It was the same as before. A repeat. Only her, who possessed strong spirit power, survived. Carrying only the burden of guilt and pain of a survivor.

Her entire body was pulled as if it was pinned to midair. Then.

“Let me go — Kuuh!”

A fist found its mark on her stomach. A heavy strike from an arm as thick as a log broke through the weakened spirit defense and impacted her intestines.

“Not yet.”

Rajas, filled with gratification, raised a corner of his mouth and a flurry of fists commenced at the same time. Countless strikes. Countless strikes without an end. The boulder like fists all found their mark. The pain-filled moans flowed out from her mouth every time the fist struck. Only sound she could make was pain-filled moans that pleaded to stop.

In the end, she threw up everything in her stomach. Then her body was discarded onto the ground like a piece of tissue.

“Ha ugh, ha... ugh...”

She lay flat on the ground writhing and drooling as she opened her mouth to breathe. It was as if she became a caterpillar, no, something even lesser.

Everything was painful. It was painful. Her heart hurt even more than her body. Physically and mentally. After withstanding countless attacks from Rajas that slowly gnawed at her heart, she couldn't move her body. She couldn't put her strength into anything. She couldn't think anything. She wanted to give up on everything.

But Rajas didn't stop his attacks.

“How fitting.”

“Ugh, uhhhh.....”

“Did you try to protect others with only that kind of strength?”

A question flew at her while she was trying to stand up, using the sword as a support. It was meant to make her think about it, but there was no need to think about it. There was no meaning in thinking about it either. Because—

“So, were you able to protect them?”

She already knew it.

“If you could go back in time, do you think you can change the outcome?”

She already knew. So—

“That’s right. You can’t protect anything. Not a single person.”

— please, stop....

“Huuu... huk...”

Everything was as Rajas said. Not just her comrades from back home, but she couldn’t protect the merchants as well. Even if she went back in time, it would have been a repeat. That despair, those tears, she couldn’t stop them.

She could never win against this mazoku. That was right. Never.

It was painful. The cold reality was more cruel than the physical pain. Bitterness of having to hear that she couldn't do anything. That was the main point.

“Acknowledge it, no, you've already started to acknowledge it, didn't you? About what a pathetic existence you are.”

“I.... I am....”

“It was your fault. All of it. No exceptions. They all died because of you.”

“Ah—”

“Isn't that right?”

“AH! AAAAAHHHHHHHH!!”

She dropped the sword that was supporting her and all strength went out from underneath her. Arms hung carelessly and shoulders drooped without any strength.

There was no strength left to hold on to the sword.

“.....”

“— finally broken?”

A joyous voice that carried a conclusion pierced her body.

That was right. She was broken. There was no more will to fight against Rajas. Everything that was precious to her, all her pride, her body which had everything taken away from; She didn't care what happened to it.

“Hmph. Now you don't even have any worth for me to kill you personally. Just like your loved ones before you, it's fitting that you die after being played around.”

She could see Rajas signal his subordinates after speaking. Several mazokus that were being protected by his dark aura immediately responded to his signal.

At the end of her fading sight, she could see mazokus drawing closer. Racing to be the first one to kill her. What came clearly in her sight were the claws that would rob her life, unkempt appearances, disgusting smiles and malice-filled murky eyes. Everything turned into a slow motion as they drew closer.

“Ah....”

That was what flowed out of her voice.

..... Why was it? Why was her end like this? Was it not enough that everything precious to her was taken away, that she was humiliated and had lost? Did her heart had to be crushed as well? She wanted to live upright so far and lived

upright until now.

But it was a mistake. Why was it a mistake? Why did it lead to such a tragic end.

Hope didn't exist. Then who made the word "hope"? What was the word made for? It didn't exist anywhere in the world.

That was right. It was useless to chase after a hope. It was useless to cling to it as well. Hope was nothing but a cruel trick to sink humans deeper into a pit of despair. How foolish was she for having believed such a thing existed until now?

What sprouted along with tears was a curse against the world that forced miseries on her. And—

"Someone. Help...."

What came out of her mouth was a desire truly like her. How could she wish for a salvation even after everything turned out like this. There was no way such a miracle existed in this world. Not a single chance, but—

Just as she was about to close her eyes against encroaching darkness, thundering noise passed by her.

Glowing blue lightning blinded her and everything became white. Mazokus that were attacking, sky filled with darkness, everything disappeared. The ruinous earth, Rajas, everything disappeared into the white light.

When the noise and the blinding light died down, all the mazokus that were rushing towards her had disappeared.

She looked around her. Without her noticing, someone gently wiped the warm tears that obscured her vision.

And there stood—

“Who are you?”

Something black fluttered. The one who stood before her was someone she knew. That boy who wore black and gave off a silent aura never seen before was—

— It was natural to close the eyes before a burning white light and let the after-images pass away. Suimei predicted when the light would disappear and slowly opened his eyes.

The atrocity that laid before his eyes made him fume quietly.

Aah, evil exist in this place as well. Evil that ridicules those who try to live honestly as foolish. Evil that steps on those soaked with tears and mourn. Evil that traps others in sadness and despair yet feel no guilt about it.

Evil that snatches away the pride of someone who strives for justice.

Evil that knows nothing of the nobility of those who fight to protect others.

That unforgivable evil.

That's right. That evil incarnate which robs others of even tiniest shred of hope for happiness.

Admiring the gradually flashing light, Suimei walked with a leisurely pace to Lefille and stood in front of her.

After the light disappeared, what soaked her eyes were tears. The torrent of tears was endless. Suimei wiped away those tears with his finger. He didn't want her to cry anymore. He wanted the tears to disappear immediately.

Her eyes were swollen red from crying. Her battered body. The reason why it was pitiful just to look at her was because she had gone through unimaginable pain.

Suimei whispered "I'm sorry for being late".

"Ah—"

It was a soft voice that flowed out from her heart before it could fully become an emotion. It was like the last sigh before the light in her heart burned out.

She was a girl who spent countless days being sad, filled with pain, blaming herself and in the end, couldn't forgive herself. Why did that girl, that kind girl have to suffer something like this? Why did the girl who was never greedy and pursued justice in the world have to suffer this kind of an end? Why did the world need to push only the people like her into the edge of misery?

“Aah—”

— Those who make others cry, remember. That there is no rain of sadness that cannot be overcome.

— Those who cause others pain, remember. That there is no ember of pain that cannot be destroyed.

— Those who are drunk in evil, do not forget. That there is no place on this world for evil creatures such as yourselves to tread on.

“— Who are you?”

“A magician. Yakagi Suimei.”

I’ll prove it with my body that I am a modern magician right here and right now.



A gust of wind passed by: did the voice of the boy standing quietly beside her summon it, or was his voice the gust itself? A single phrase that passed by with a cold breeze in heated air. Rajas must have heard it as well.

“A... magician.”

Rajas frowned and repeated Suimei’s words. He didn’t recognize Suimei for a moment due to his different clothes, but soon made an expression of recognition.

“Yes, you’re that.... annoying mage kid from that time.”

Suimei remained silent, leaned sideways and stared down at Rajas. Rajas spoke in bemused tone as if he was pleasantly surprised.

“So, a mere mage managed to get here past all my subordinates. There should have been quite a lot of them, hmmm?”

“Yea, needlessly many. You seem to have scrapped all kinds of trash together. I almost threw up.”

“Seems like you had quite the fun with those trash. Considering your state, I can feel the genuineness of your words. Kuhahahaha!!”

Rajas smiled mockingly while twisting his words. But Suimei’s appearance was indeed pitiful. There were no visible wounds, but his black clothes were torn everywhere. Neither his stance nor movement felt spritely, his rough breathing felt somewhat laboured and there were even faint sword marks on his face. It showed that getting here must have been quite a chore.

Rajas looked at Suimei and asked as if he was still interested.

“— So? How did you get here? Did you go through them all or did you try to run?”

“I simply removed the ones blocking my path.”

“Hoo.. Talking big when you look like that.”

Rajas laughed mockingly again. Perhaps he saw Suimei and thought of it only as a bluff of a wounded person. The way Suimei talked confidently only appeared as a bluff from someone who did not like losing.

“So tell me. Why did you go through all that to come here?”

“I don’t think now’s the time to be nitpicky about a small detail like that.”

“... You’re not going to say you came to rescue that girl over there, are you?”

“What if that’s the truth?”

Suimei replied to Rajas’ question. He came to rescue her. To be her strength. Even though she refused his hand for help. Even though she didn’t need to do that. It was too late now.

Rajas noticed Suimei’s will and exploded into laughter a beat later.

“What?! HAHAHAHAA!! You really said something like that!! You came to save a girl in this situation?! You must be out of your mind!”

That was right. Just like Rajas said, he was out of his mind. He couldn’t have been thinking rationally to go through an army of mazokus to walk into the jaws of death. There was nothing he could gain by coming here. There was nothing a human could want. He would only have things to lose by coming here. But why?

“Do you think this wench is worth saving? This tramp who couldn’t save anything and ran from every battle to save her own precious life?”

“Yea.”

What was he thinking, nodding with his eyes closed? He admitted that it was a foolish action and knew it in his heart. To him Rajas —

“Fufu— what make you go so far for her? Isn’t it fine for you to avoid getting injured and simply ignore this wench? Isn’t it fine for you to forget about her as if she never existed in the first place?”

“I can’t do that. If I did that, I couldn’t save her.”

“What—?”

When Rajas frowned at the unexpected answer from Suimei, Suimei spoke challengingly.

“And saving the unfortunate. Saving those who cannot be saved is the path I believe in. I simply couldn’t abandon that path. So that’s why—”

That’s why I came all the way here to a place like this.

That was right. Suimei triumphantly declared himself. He declared that he was there to save her and to fight him.

Rajas looked stunned to hear the resolve of Suimei’s declaration for a moment, but soon let out a sigh.

“Ha—”

Rajas mocked Suimei' declaration.

“Uhahahah!!! How foolish! For that kind of reason! You came here for that?! You walk into the jaw of death going through my subordinates! And this is what you say? Saving those who cannot be saved? To think you came all the way here with that kind of useless ideal. There's a limit to how stupid you can be!! Uhahahahah! It's hilarious —”

“So what?”

“—?!”

What stopped Rajas' rambunctious laughter was Suimei's cold reply.

A gust of wind: colder than the chilly wind sweeping the northern lands froze everyone's heart and took away even the sound of laughter, and sound of fear, as if they were not necessary.

What filled the area was chilling cold. It was not that the temperature was cold. There was a source of coldness that was enough to flay skins and rob consciousness. Areas that had just been heated up by Rajas' spirit appeared as if they had turned into a sheet of ice. And the boy who created this situation, Suimei, looked at the Demon General who laughed at his resolve unwaveringly in the eyes.

“.... Boy, you better change the way you're looking at me. I don't like it.”

“You think I'm going to listen to you?”

“Then I’ll make you listen by force!”

What came out of Rajas’ mouth was a roar loud enough to shake everything around them. The shockwave stirred up dust into the air and pebbles to shoot off in every direction. In a moment, an arm and a fist resembling an ancient oak tree trunk flew towards Suimei.

What resisted the arm that would turn everything in its path into a pulp of meat was a unique spell that Rajas never heard before.

“Primum ex puinoim excipio.” (Five-layered wall)

Five magical circles glowing golden formed from the tip of Suimei’s extended arm to form a shield. Whether it was drawn or formed, the shattered fragments came together to form their original shape.

The golden defense was perfectly on time. Rajas’ fist and Suimei’s magic collided.

Golden spark flew everywhere and whether it reached its limit or its purpose was different in the first place, the second magic circle flew back and so did the third circle.

“Oooooohhhhhhhhh!!”

“Hyaaaaaaaahhh!!”

The fist tried to penetrate the magical circle and the magic that remained firm in place with golden sparks flying out from every punch. The ground cracked as it failed against the shockwave and windstorm swept the area. They soon formed a wind stream and dyed the air with the dread of the battle.

Amidst the exchange of shouts between both parties, the fourth magic circle started rotating. And then—

“Hiiiik—?!”

The massive force that was directed at Suimei suddenly changed direction. With a thunderous sound, Rajas’ immense body sheared the earth as it was thrown back over a hill by a tsunami of wind.

“Che. Even with the 5th Wall (attenuation wall) he only flew back that much.... Man, he’s unnecessarily strong...”

Suimei shrugged his shoulders while cursing Rajas, who had disappeared beyond his sight. But he was weakened as well. Considering how many he had to fight while coming to rescue Lefille, it was only natural.

Out of nowhere, he turned to face her, and—

“Stand up, Lefille. Let’s take him down.”

He said that towards me. Let’s fight together. The two of us can fight together. As if he wanted my co-operation— no, to encourage me, who had given up. They were sincerely genuine. The eyes that looked at me glowed mysterious crimson and shined honesty above all. Passion that shined through

those eyes were like glowing red hot steel. They were passionate eyes. Eyes of a man who will never compromise his belief.

But I didn't have enough strength left to stand alongside his resolve.

It was all used up in the battle with Rajas just before. So I couldn't—

“I can't.”

That was right. I could only drop my head and give up.

“Hmmm—?”

“I can't. I can't win against him. You can't win against him and neither can I. He's going to kill us both.”

“Oi.... Lefille, what happened to you?”

Suimei asked as if he was taken aback. He probably believed that we could combine our strength to fight. That two of us could defeat him.

But now, everything was hopeless. Because....

“We can't win against Rajas. That mazoku is too strong. Even if we combine our strength, we can't win.”

“How can you know without trying?”

“No, I can tell. Rajas is strong. Even the elites of Noshias’ army fell before him. We can’t defeat something like him with just our strength. It’s impossible. It’s both yours and my fate to die by Rajas’ hands.”

That was the way it was meant to be. It was an unchangeable fate. My prediction of the future probably sounded like me being weak to him. But it was the truth. No matter how strong one’s heart was, no matter how courageous one was, it was nothing but a midsummer night’s dream in front of those with absolute power.

Looking at the sight of me, Suimei dropped his shoulders and closed his eyes. Was he disappointed in me? He was looking down so I couldn’t tell his expression, but he was surely thinking that.

“.... Is that alright with you? Are you really alright with an ending like that?”

“Yes. I don’t care how it ends. I give up everything. I’m tired of it all.”

“.... Alright.”

I could hear the reply. Did he realize it? The truth that everything was over already. There was no more need to resist. Everything will be fine after a few moments of pain.

Suimei was already standing with his back turned to her.

But that wasn’t the way she wanted him to be. That black robed figure was

standing to meet the threat of Rajas head on.

“Suimei?”

“Then I’ll do what I want. If Lefille thinks that, then all I need to do is make that evil creature surrender.”

Suimei’s words showed his belief in hope. His belief was so short sighted, my own voice became harsh.

“What are you talking about! You don’t even know Rajas’ full power! Rajas is fundamentally different from the mazokus you defeated so far!”

“He probably is. But if I give up here, I can’t save you, Lefille and I can’t reach what I chased after either.”

Was what he declared triumphantly to Rajas just before what he was chasing after?

“To save who cannot be saved? You idiot! People who will be miserable will exist in the world! Anywhere and anytime. There’s no exception!”

“Even then.”

“It’s all a fantasy! A fraud! A story that would come out in a child’s dream.”

“Even then.”

“What about ‘even then’? If you say some empty words like that, does it suddenly save us?”

“Even then.”

“..... That kind of thing, it’ll never be achieved. It’s impossible. Never....”

That was right. It will never happen. Somewhere in this world was a person going hungry. Somewhere in this world was a person collapsing from sadness. Somewhere in this world was a person dying with rage in their heart. And someone who could not be saved existed here.

There were no exceptions. Someone who could not be saved existed. Always.

He probably knew that, deep down inside. If he was someone with rational sense, if he faced the truth, it was a fantasy that he should have abandoned a long time ago.

But still, as if he was trying to explain something to a child who couldn’t understand, he swayed his head and—

“Lefille, that’s not something you decide. Whether I could save someone or not will be found out at the end of the path I walk.”

“What are you going to do chasing something like that? It’s abstract and uncertain. Do you think it will just end at not finding it if you keep walking down that path? At the end of that path is the despair of someone who was betrayed by hope.”

“Perhaps.”

“Then—”

“But I’m not going to look back. Isn’t that right? My dream does not exist behind me. The day I give up my dreams, that man who swore an oath back then doesn’t exist anymore. So—”

— So, just watch me. The hope that I dream of. Watch me chase after my hope.

“Ah.....”

Why was that figure, who defeated my argument with simple ‘watch me’, so bright? It was the brightness of the soul that none had witnessed before.

Rajas who was thrown back returned, crushing the earth with each step. Glaring murderously, focused on Suimei.

“Boy, you dare.....”

“Stay down when you get thrown back, you fiendish bastard!”

“Shutupppppp!!”

With that roar, a ball of energy in Rajas’ hand grew exponentially. Black

swallowed black and casted jaded purplish-shadows all around the area. It was Rajas' magic that had obliterated a Noshias' fortress and turned this land barren.

“It's time for you and that wench to disappear forever!”

This was the end. The end. I didn't have any more spirit powers left, so there is no way to withstand that attack. There was no magic strong enough to resist that kind of power in this land. That was why...

“Suimei.... That's enough.... Let's give up....”

Even though nothing would change, Suimei ignored my words and chanted magic as if that kind of attack was nothing.

“Non amo munus scutum omnes impetum invictus.” (My shield is not a shield. It is strong before any attack and unshakeable under any fire.)

The mana grew larger with the casting chant. Golden mana spread as if resisting the darkness and started rotating like a tornado.

“Invincibility immobilitas immortalis cumque mane surrexistant castle.” (Indestructible slab of rock, the castle decorated with golden light formed from the essence of the stars. Its name is...)

Each ray of the golden light split and headed to their respective destination as if trying to carry their own mission. They started to form into the shape of a glowing gold lightning. Clacking sound, as if they were fitting into each other, sounded and—

“Firmus congrega aurum magnalea!” (My sturdy and radiant castle)

At the end of Suimei’s chant, the magic circles came together to overlap each other. At the same time the magic circle formed, darkness swallowed the scenery as if it would take everything away.

“—Kuugggh!!”

.... This was the end. End of everything. The onslaught of Rajas’ attack would suck in both body and soul into darkness.

But— It wasn’t the end. I had closed my two eyes in anticipation of death. When I opened my eyes, Suimei and I were unharmed and still living.

After the cloud of sand settled down, I was not the only one standing in surprise.

“H, how could this be....?! My power was strong enough to blow away an entire fortress. Why? Why isn’t it working now?”

While a shocked voice rang out, there was a breathtaking sight happening nearby.

There were letters and numbers arranged geometrically projecting a barrier around the area. Golden mana light surrounded them. In the magic circle drawn on the ground, there were clock hands for hour and minute drawn on it. Other magic circles were spread out as if protecting the nearby vicinity. Big and small magic circles, and there were magic circles I had seen before as well. We were surrounded by numerous golden magic circles.

diminish.

He dodged Rajas' indiscriminating attacks and fought with the mana imbued silver sword while chaining words together to cast magic.

It was a difficult battle and even a single strike from Rajas' fist was deadly. But he didn't appear pitiable. As if he was saying that red hot resolve in his heart was the source of his energy, his back was sturdy like they were embedded with metal implants. His appearance of never bending and standing straight was stronger than anyone here.

Every time the mazoku's qi brushed by his skin and clothes, small gashes increased on Suimei's face and body. But he didn't stop. The boy's courageous roars dispelled oncoming tide of fear. All atmosphere that discouraged my heart, he repelled and penetrated through them.

... While he was fighting a heated battle with his wounded body, while he was soaked in the heat of battle, I came to my sense.

— Just what am I doing.

While he was fighting, I abandoned everything, denied all his words and just knelt there. I was simply watching. I decided that there was nothing I could do and just watched. I didn't know for how long, but I watched.

“.....”

What was visible was his back. That single minded back. That determined heart of a boy who wants everyone who cries at this unjust world to be happy.

That shining back.

Save those who cannot be saved. His determination to say such a thing. Is it fine to be fascinated by him yet do nothing—?

Suimei's body bounced off Rajas' fist and flew back in front of me. He was hurt all over. But his strength to get back up, nor his determination did not diminish one bit. He stood up strong as if he was saying he didn't lose yet.

I didn't realize when but I was talking to him when I realized.

“Suimei.... Why do you go so far.....”

What drives you to go so far? When I asked that, he spoke curtly while still facing forward.

“Because I want to protect you.”

“—”

When I listened his words, something revived within me. The heated heart lying at the center of the broken heart.

“You know how it feels, right? You have someone you want to protect as well. You came here because you had someone you wanted to protect even if it cost your life, right?”

“Ah—”

I wanted to protect. That was right. His thoughts and beliefs were the same as mine. That was why he was standing tall here no matter how much he was hurt.

Was it alright for me to give up like this? No, it wasn't alright. I didn't want that kind of an end. I never wanted that kind of an end. I wanted to run towards my dream once more. Never stopping, just like that boy with the same thought as me.

.... That boy charged towards the gigantic enemy once more. To push forward his belief.

When I realized it, I couldn't sit by any longer.

“I—”

So once more. One more time. Give me the strength to fight once more. I prayed dearly with my bloodied, pain-filled and unsightly figure.

“Our goddess, Alshuna. For me, who couldn't change anything on my own. For me, who couldn't change on my own. Please give me the courage to change myself just once. I implore you, just once. Just one more chance for me—”

It was a sincere wish and dearly prayed words. To encourage myself and blessing of revival to be able to grab the sword once more. But the goddess would never help. I already knew it. Because she didn't exist in this world. She simply watched on. So all these words were to help myself change.

Then when I opened my eyes, my body was filled with strength that was not there before. As if the time I knelt and gave up was a lie, the weakness that occupied my heart did not exist anywhere now.

The one who gave me this strength, this courage, was that boy standing in front. He taught me to push forward with my belief. He showed me physically, he awoke me, so I could stand again.

I grabbed the sword I had dropped and swung with all my might.

The red wind created by the sword cut between Suimei and Rajas.

“Haaat— that wench?! Where did you get that strength?”

“Lefille.....”

What greeted me, who stood up once again, was a face of shock and a face of happiness. There was no need to explain to whom each of the face belonged to.

The power of spirit. I released all the power I could muster. Red Wind. Everything dyed crimson as if the spirit of war and fire Ishaktoni’s crimson flash. Rajas couldn’t withstand the sudden gust of wind and stepped back.

“K..kuuh..... This is.”

Rajas blocked his face with his arms to avoid the gale. I spoke out my resolve while pointing the sword at him.

“..... Rajas. Watch closely with your own two eyes. This is the power that will exterminate you mazokus. The disciple of the goddess. Power of the spirit.”

“Power to destroy what? You’re just a wench who ran because you were afraid of death!”

“—Shut up..... I won’t run anymore to live like who I am right now! No matter what or who. Even from this fate!”

“You stupid girl! Only thing you can do is blabberrrrr!”

I faced screaming Rajas’ fist with the greatsword and crimson flash. A fist and an arm with strong aura extended this way, but I didn’t fly back this time. I wrapped the sword with the red wind and struck at Rajas’ fist, deflecting it.

“Kuuuh! W, what?! That was completely different from before.....”

The difference was natural. My weak self died moments ago, and what stood here was my new self. Attacks that pressed me until now didn’t work anymore. And I didn’t have the time to explain something like that to him.

“Hyyaaaapp!!”

I put even greater strength into my hands that were swinging the sword as if saying my ears no longer wanted to hear his baffled voice.

This round was different than just before. I didn’t fall behind in speed and my

number of attacks were greater. The power of the attack was also enough to pierce him.

Perhaps he was shocked, but Rajas flailed his arms around randomly. It was random and inaccurate attacks, but luckily, Rajas spotted a chance for a critical strike. If it landed, it wouldn't end at a mere injury. Of course, that was based on the assumption it would find its mark.

— So I became like the colour of light which surrounded me, a crimson flash.

No one could watch my movement to the end. The crimson wind surpassed all speed and left no shadow. The swiftness was wonderous. With speed fast enough to mistake for a teleportation, I moved behind Rajas' back as if I was sliding.

“You wench, when did you—”

By the time he noticed and turned around, it was too late. At the same time I finished materializing, a precise strike slashed Rajas' chest.

“Kuup. Kuaaaaahhh!”

Rajas' boulder like chest split open. It was not a fatal blow, but from the wound, the source of mazoku's power, which had tormented her until now, steamed out.

This was the perfect opportunity.

“Gala varna!” (Basan)

I swung the greatsword above my head and struck like a flash with all my strength. With my posture so low I was almost touching the ground, a crimson flash erupted, taking the form of a gigantic strike and cut through the sky and earth.



Then the attack hit Rajas, who was surrounded with steam like source of power—but

“You’re tough.”

Rajas was still alive and well despite having received Basan’s attack head on. There were cuts everywhere on his body with steam sprouting everywhere, but he was standing. He was struck with Suimei and my attack consecutively. Just how strong was this mazoku?

“Kuhhp....!!”

While my face was frowning with anxiousness and tiredness from consecutive attacks, Rajas suddenly took a huge step back.

I was tense wondering what his plan was, but his gigantic body turned around.

Was he planning to cut and run?

“What— stop right there!”

“... We’ll push back this duel to next time. Swordsman of Noshias.”

He probably decided that it was disadvantageous for him to continue. Rajas, who spoke as if he was outraged, attempted to escape. It seemed he had some strength left as he flew and moved far away in a blink of an eye.

“Hyaaaaaaaaa!!”

I launched a torrent of attack towards Rajas as if I would cut his backside whole. But the speed of the red wind couldn’t match Rajas’. Crimson flash that

couldn't close the distance became weaker and turned into a normal breeze.

— He got away. There was no way to land an attack with that kind of distance. The story would be different if I could fly like Rajas, but I couldn't.

That was why it ended here. I could finally get here thanks to Suimei. He helped me, but the enemy I needed to defeat managed to get away from the place where I was suppose to defeat him.

“Damn it....”

The duel was postponed to later. To end things in such a clammy manner... I just needed to take one more step... Just a little bit... If I surpassed him just a little bit more... Then I might have...

— It was when I bit my lips in dejection.

Intensity of mana rose behind my back. No, a lukewarm expression like “rose” wasn't suitable to describe it. This was the shockwave occurring when mana explosively increased. And the one who was creating it was of course —

“S, Suimei?”

Did this boy have no end to his mana? Did he still have strength left over after defeating the mazoku army, defend against Rajas' attack and even fight him? He walked over here while maintaining his power. It was like he was taking a leisurely stroll and soon he stood beside me. And what rang out was the magician's voice.

“Abreq ad habra.” (Death, you will be destroyed before my thunder)

... Gigantic crimson sword-like wind turned to mere winds just behind him.

It was dangerous. To think that wench stood up again in no time. No, not only that, but to get even stronger. I don't know what happened, but it was probably because of that mage brat.

He grinded his teeth after tasting the bitterness of retreating.

“I won't forget this humiliation, humans. I'll pay you back once this wound heals....”

Rajas flew towards even greater elevation while captivated by rage and muttering endlessly.

“...It might be dangerous to pass through a cumulonimbus cloud with this kind of injury, but it can't be helped.”

What I looked at was the escape route I needed to go through. There was a possibility they could catch up if I flew too low. Considering how far away they were now, it wasn't likely to happen, but this was after that dramatic reversal in battle. I knew I could hide for certain if I went past the clouds.

It was infuriating, but I had taken severe damage due to that wench's counter-attack. If I just jumped into the cumulonimbus cloud in my current state, it wouldn't be pretty. But now wasn't the time to be concerned with

something like that. This was the only way to go back.

— That's right. It was the time to worry about penetrating through the cumulonimbus cloud.

“What....?”

I noticed it when I looked up.

My mind went blank at the unexpected turn of events. That was right—

There was no cumulonimbus cloud. Nowhere in the sky.

“—?!”

I was so surprised I looked around left and right furiously. Something that should have been there wasn't there. That cumulonimbus cloud carrying thunder with it, that loud thunder, it was just there until moments ago.

I stared at the spot wondering if I was seeing things, but there was no cumulonimbus cloud. There was only the cloudy sky hiding the starlight.

There was thunder sounding from somewhere since some time ago. It was incredibly noisy even during the battle. But how could it have been? Where was the thunder noise coming from even though there was no cumulonimbus cloud?

I looked down in that moment.

“What.....?!”

I couldn't say anything at the abominable plight occurring just under my feet.

At the end of the gaze was an incredible sight that stopped my breath. The army that was assembled in the plains, mountainside and the forest was nowhere to be seen. In their place were burning flames, and sunken earth.

Ones trapped in never-melting ice, ones boiling and melting in the sea of eternally decaying ocean of poison and acid. And on the ground was a figure with a familiar-like shadow. The most shocking thing above all was the fact the remains did not match the number of his minions.

The army I had brought wasn't there as if they never existed in the first place.

“W, what happened here....”

There was no way something like this could have happened. Even if the humans sent an army, they could never create such a horrendous sight. I knew that extremely well from battles at Noshias. But if an atrocity like this happened here, there must be a culprit as well—

If there was a culprit, it was probably him.

— I simply removed the ones blocking my path.

That boy's words came clearly to the mind as if he had whispered it into my ears. Those words and the atrocity below connected.

That was right. Before that boy reached me, my minions would've have blocked him.

And the one who stood in the centre of it all was that boy. That human who proclaimed himself a magician.

... The thunder smashed the ground and the wind howled. It destroyed everything at random. The power generated by the boy at the centre threw back sands and stones, and turned it all into soot.

A shockwave. It was a shockwave. Because the power that formed the magic was too strong, the shockwave was annihilating everything around him. The way thunders pulverized everything around it, the way eye of the tornado was localizing, they were only miniaturized version of what would happen in the near future.

“T, that's the precursor....? It doesn't make any sense—”

— That was right. There was no way for the Demon Chief Rajas to know. Abra Merin, Abrahamic magic type. Commonly known as “Divine Magic” or “Holy Magic”. This magic was the most famous and powerful of the magics that burrowed power from holy guardian angels to repel, dispel and control demons — Abrakadabra (Pour the thunder unto your death).

He took the spell as a framework and turned it into his greatest offensive magic spell against demons and ghosts using modern magic theories.

Behind the back of the man who appeared like a haze was a figure of a woman. There was no feeling of life from the figure shaped like a woman. It was as if the sculpture was made from colour of minerals existing between grey and grey. It was neither holy nor evil. But there was immense power emanating from it.

“Aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh.....”

That sculpture opened its mouth wide and shouted to summon a pillar of lighting from the sky.

.... I had never seen something like that before. A mere human commanding this unknown power, a mysterious power. That kind of power was not something a human of this world could possess. Even if he was a hero called from another world, it was impossible. A hero received the goddess' power when summoned. A hero could never possess an ability like that.

That was right. A hero was a being summoned with absolute blessings of the elements and strength far surpassing a normal human. But that man did not possess any of the traits. So it was not possible.

That was a magic without the elements' blessing. It controlled uncontrollable ideas, changed the reality and changed this world created by the Goddess as it pleased. That thunder in front of my eyes was holier and more frightening than anything ever encountered before.

I've never heard of anyone possessing that kind of strength, that kind of abilities. No human in this world wielded that kind of unreasonable power. None whatsoever.

But where did that man.... How...

— Magician, Akagi Suimei.

“A magician....? What’s that?! That boy isn’t a mage?!”

The thunder split into thousands of strands, leaving torrent of echos after a loud noise and gathered at the centre of the pile of magic circles.

The sculpture shouted endlessly and blue flashing light filled up the world from the sky to the end of horizon. At the end of my sight was the face of a similarly shocked and resolved crimson eyes from that cheeky boy. And the unmistakable aura of death that cannot be dodged—

“DamnitTTTTT!!”

— Now, you evil creature that sucks on humanity’s despair like honey. Rot away and disappear before the association magicians’ holy path.

I could see the man’s lips moving clearly.

After that, he placed a finger at the centre of the magic circle.

In a moment, deafening thunderous noise passed by. Thousands of strands of light inside the radius of the magic circle formed a gigantic pillar and consumed everything in sight.

The darkness of the god of death I worshipped did not exist anywhere.
Nowhere.

And thus, the Demon Chief Rajas screamed in rage before being sucked into a
strand of light created by the holy thunder.

Epilogue



“I’m exhausted.”

Suimei laid down with his limbs spread out while chasing the blinking thunder disappear into the darkness with his eyes. He felt the sensation of hardness of the ground with his back as he catch his breath.

He really poured everything he had this time. He had to figure out how strong the mazokus were as well as whittle down their strength, but it might have been too adventurous to have killed any mazoku standing in the way. Especially the battle with Rajas and “abra q ad hav” at the end.

Rajas possessed surprising amount of strength, so his magic wasn’t as effective as he had hoped. In the end, he was almost forced to field the strongest trump card amongst the divine magic he could use.

But he no longer had mana left. This meant there was no possibility.

Suimei thought that as he looked at the sky where Rajas had disappeared off to.

“... Was it just luck?”

Frankly, it was unexpected that holy magic was the most effective magic against the mazokus. From the conversation with Lefille, he wondered if they were related with an evil called “god of death”, but to think it was correct. It might have been obvious that darkness was weak to light or evil being was subservient to divine being, but for a magician like him, it was a blind spot.

He avoided the simple assumption that mazokus were evil beings and focused

on the fact they were special magical beings of this world. That was why he began to realize it when he first came in contact with their uncomfortable aura and came to the conclusion in the forest. It was several hours after the first battle.

The mindset of a magician, whether it was logical or biological trap. It was because he tried to find a conventional weakness, he did not realize such a simple truth. It was strange in some sense.

But he was lucky that it was holy magic that was effective. If a magic that was effective against mazoku was one of the magics that was diluted in strength due to this world, it could have been a disadvantageous situation against Rajas.

Originating from Judea's secret ritual, Kabbalah and to Gnosticism, Abramelin Abraham's magic was used as anti-demonic and anti-undead magic in modern times. This divine secret was a re-arrangement of his magic, and due to the special attributes of the magic, it was only effective against certain types of evil.

If one wanted to utilize over a certain amount of power, it took time to summon a "Divine Guardian Angel" and entrust half the soul momentarily. But unlike magic that were less effective unless used on earth, such as astrology or needing earth's object or geography, divine magic had no limitation to due to location.

The void that exists between outer realm and between each realm. The unadulterated and unsorted power that exists in the void— Etheric. And by materializing a divine guardian angel, which was a unique spirit that did not fall under any category of spirits from monad, there was no problem using the magic in this world as it was a technique utilizing a structured magic.

It was lucky that the magic he used with all his might was effective. Guess one could call it a luck that the absolute power of the magic he used was around Rajas' strength.

But the power of the god of death was bestowed on the mazokus. If there was a mazoku that possessed greater strength and more power than Rajas, it wouldn't end so easily.

“..... Nakshatra. Well, I don't have any plans to get involved.”

The leader of them all, Demon King Nakshatra. That sorry mess of nuisance covered in veil, without even knowing if it was him or her, probably received even greater power from the god of death than Rajas. He didn't plan to get involved with it, but there was a chance for encounter and there was a possibility that another Demon Chief would be stronger than Rajas.

There was a need to plan ahead just in case. Thinking ahead made his head throb in pain.

Lefille, who was beside Suimei who still breathed roughly and let out a sigh, spoke.

“Suimei. Thanks. I lived because you came.”

“It's nothing. It's kind of embarrassing to hear that after showing up late.”

Suimei admitted his true thought after hearing Lefille thank him. He could not deny that he was reluctant ever since he first faced against a mazoku. If he had resolved himself, he wouldn't have been late either. And the rest was history.

“.... Are the others?”

“.... Yeah.”

Her depressed voice was the reply. It could have been easily guessed from the atrocious scenery on the way here, but to think they were all dead.

He had already given up anticipation of them being fine from the moment he grabbed her not to go and an adventurer controlled by a mazoku appeared. It was not something he should be saying but they were comrades he spent time with. Their death was regrettable.

Looking back, when he chased Lefille into the forest was the split in the road. If he was able to convince others more proficiently back then, if he could make Lefille stay, it could have ended better.

Of course, he thought everything was too late to contemplate now.....

“.....Suimei. Don't think too much about it. It's not something I should be saying, but it's not your fault that they're dead.”

“Thanks for saying that. But aren't you thinking about it more than me, Lefille?”

“T, that's”

She spoke as if she was caught off guard when questioned back. Soon,

desolate atmosphere surrounded them. She was definitely thinking about it. There was no way she couldn't. She couldn't protect the ones she wanted to protect. Whether it was because she was late or whether she couldn't save them even though she was not late, it was painful nonetheless.

And Rajas aimed precisely for that. A creature as evil as that was proficient in digging into the opponent's' weakness as well. Almost disgustingly proficient.

That was why it hurt her even more.

"... Lefille. Unlike me, you didn't hesitate to jump in and save others. Don't be so hard on yourself."

"O, ok....."

Her stuttering voice was heavy. Words like "you tried", or "you did what you could" was nothing but a cheap consolation before everything that had transpired. That was why Lefille was depressed and there was nothing more he could say.

How long was she like that? Was she praying for those who passed away? Or was it the time she took to get herself back together again? Amidst deep silence, Lefille spoke out of nowhere.

"Suimei, I....."

"Hmm?"

“I, I want to thank you.”

“..... What. Again?”

She already thanked him earlier. Suimei thought weirdly about her repeating words, but there was a calm but embarrassed voice that followed up.

“Just before. When you said you came to save me, I was very happy. So.....”

“Ah, okay.....”

“Thanks.”

“Y, yea.... It was nothing that my lady needs to thank me for.”

Due to Lefille’s serious tone, a rare respectful way of speech popped out from Suimei. It was pretty embarrassing to hear her say it again — but thinking back, what he said when facing Rajas and talking to her was all very embarrassing stuff.

Uwaaaaahhhh—

What I chased after. The association’s philosophy and father’s wish. My way of saving people. The self-righteousness. It was the atmosphere. It was the atmosphere’s fault. It was the atmosphere’s fault that he blurted it all out. That was right.

He simply needed to think of them like that and forget it ever happened.

Suimei thought like that shook his head vigorously. When Suimei began to avoid facing the reality, Lefille spoke with resolve-filled voice.

“Thanks to you, I could find courage. I’m not going to give up and walk on my own path properly. Well, getting stronger and fighting mazokus won’t change.”

..... She seemed to have recovered her broken heart. It was fortunate that she managed to suppress her despair.

When Suimei looked up into the sky without saying anything, Lefille spoke in curious tone.

“..... What is it?”

“Hmm? Ah, I think that’s good as well.”

“I won’t give up anymore. I’m going to try my best to the end no matter what. You taught me that.”

To the girl speaking such embarrassing words with a straight face, Suimei spoke with self-deprecating tone.

“Stop it. I copied those words from someone else.”

“Copied?”

“Yea, I was scolded by someone extremely strong before. I heard it then.”

That was right. I knew what it was like to be denied. Having to hear it from someone strong felt as if the entire world was denying me. When stuck in that difficult situation, when I hesitated in my heart, there was a man who pointed out that my dream didn't exist behind me. That was right—

“You met a good person.”

“No, I thought he was out of his mind at the time. Well, I thank him nonetheless, but he's fundamentally evil.”

Lefille thought of those words as a story. A surprised “eh.....” sound could be heard.

That was right. That man who said those words only ever laughed at others dreams. He was the kind of a man who appeared out of nowhere in crucial moments to applaud and interrupt. He probably thought it wouldn't be fun to have the person he was watching die.

That was why, that was why back then, he said something like that.....

“..... But his words back then, he probably meant it.”

“You seem confused yourself.”

“Is that so.”

“Fufufu.....”

What was so funny? Lefille suddenly smiled a little. The conversation partner smiled so warmly at the end of the story, it felt as if being treated like a child and a little unpleasant — but it was fortunate to just be able to listen to her warm voice.

Either way, the battle was over. The worst case was avoided — it was that moment of being relieved and lying in a comfortable atmosphere. Something occurred beside Suimei, who was lying down.

—— Thump.

“Hiyuuu!!”

Suddenly a sound of something being thrown on the ground and a cute scream could be heard. It was probably, no, definitely Lefille’s voice, but this kind of high pitched voice was never heard before.

Of course, this was the first time Suimei heard Lefille scream.

“Oi, Lefille, what’s happening.....”

Even moving was painful, so he barely turned his head to look. Over there was the owner of the voice, Lefille, as expected.

——— A really small Lefille.

“Ouch.... What is it, Suimei?”

He witnessed such a flabbergasting moment, he wanted to rub his eyes. Just like that, there was a young girl who appeared as if she was in the elementary school.

Red haired ponytail. Slightly raised and sharp shape of the eyes, and white skin befitting a person from a snowy country. The calm black atmosphere sensed when he first saw her. She definitely looked like Lefille. So this small girl was miniaturized Lefille..... Definitely.

But what was this situation? Because her body became smaller, the clothes became baggy, and tears hung at the edge of eyes as she planted her face on the ground when she fell, she was wiping away the mud on her face with the back of her hands. She asked that question, but it was him who wanted to ask her that——

“No, what happened with you? You became smaller.”

“Smaller....?”

When asked, the smaller Lefille tilted her head with what could only be described as a lovely expression and looked at her body. And the expression changed to that of panic.

“Eh? Eh? W, what is this? What’s going on Suimei?”

“No, no, no. I’m the one who should be asking you that.”

“My body! My body’s smaller! Why? Why did this happen?”

“Is this the first time it’s happened? Ah, I guess it is a first time....”

“Of course! There’s no way something like this happened before!”

Lefille, who was shouting at the strange incident that occurred suddenly, was confused. It was the first time. Well, it would be difficult to have such event occur regularly as well. But Lefille spoke as if she had her suspicions.

“D, did Rajas use some evil spell on me during the fight....”

Lefille spoke with a serious expression. Her anxiousness could be felt. If it was a curse, considering what happened before, it could be considered, but would he really have used a curse that turned back age? Plus, it took effect after everything was over. Even for a curse, it showed up way too late. This kind of curse was useless no matter the situation.

He looked carefully to see if it was something Rajas did with his last bit of strength.

“..... No, it doesn’t look like it. There’s no trace of any curse other than the one you already had.”

“Uhh, then why—”

Lefille, who was holding her head with her arms showed anxious expression like never before.

But now was the time to think about why this happened first. She appeared to look for clues to the cause, was there really something that would cause this kind of abnormality?

There were many factors that separated Lefille from a regular human.

— Power of the spirits.

Speaking of which, Suimei remembered extraordinary power Lefille emitted towards end of the battle. The way Lefille commanded over the air around her was an ability different from what he had seen so far. The strength of the power, the area of effect of the power, and the kind of the power. It was different from when it blew away mazoku minions. It was strong enough to be described of a different calibre.

With those guesses in mind, the answer was obvious.

But that's way too simple.

Suimei silently denied the conclusion he came to in his heart. But he recalled the divine magic case that just happened. Considering he arrived at the answer because he did not think things simplistically, that kind of straightforward thinking could not be denied in this world.

“Say, Lefille.”

“..... Smaller. Everything. All of it. Uuuuh. What is it, it feels like I’ve lost everything precious at once.... Heee.”

“Oi. OI!”

“Hmm? Ah, sorry. What is it, Suimei?”

Lefille looked at Suimei while hiding her sigh with her sleeve. Suimei spoke his theory to her.

“Maybe your body became smaller because you used too much spirit power, Lefille.”

“.....? Why do you think that?”

“Hmm— It’s just a guess, but your body is a mix between half human and half spirit. If you use too much of the spirit’s original body of power like etheric or monad, the spirit part would disappear....”

“There’s words I don’t recognize mixed in there.... So simply put, you mean I’m like this because I used too much power? But how is that related to my body becoming smaller? Until now, I was never like this no matter how much power I used. Plus, does it make sense in the first place to have my body shrink? You simply can’t use the power of the spirit if it disappears.”

“Well, that’s true. But you’re a spirit, Lefille. There’s a lot of unexplained things where I come from, too.....”

That was right. In that other world, it has been a long time since spirits existed and since there were not many records as well, the beings called “spirits” were not fully explained.

But Lefille, who was born a half-spirit possessed a physical body as well as an astral body and energy composed of spirits to maintain her body. It could be thought as having used too much of what composed part of the body and it being simply depleted, but just as she said, body becoming smaller was questionable. No—

“... Yeah. Lefille, your body originated from a spirit so it’s fundamentally different from a physical body. Your existence is like a summoned spirit. The manifesting existence has its real form and physical body resting in this world. If the spirit power, which forms the basis, gets weaker, the real body becomes faint. Ah, if that’s the case, it’s comprehensible. The being called Lefille is there, but the existence become more faint. So it manifests itself smaller and thus it affects the real body.”

“S, Suimei! I can’t understand anything because you’re making it too complicated! Summarize simply!”

“Hmm? Ah, sorry. I’ll summarize it later.... That’s that, but Lefille, don’t go too wild in that state....”

Before Suimei could finish, Lefille tripped over her own clothes and shoes——

“W, wah!? Hiik?!”

She fell on her face again. She waddled in the place to get up momentarily

before deciding it was too difficult to do on her own and asked Suimei reluctantly.

“..... Suimei, I’m sorry, but can you lend me a hand? The clothes and the shoes are too big for me to get up by myself.”

“.....”

“Suimei?”

Lefille called over with a curious voice as to why Suimei wasn’t answering— But Suimei didn’t have the strength to help her. He had his own troubles, laying flat on the ground.

“Uhhh.... You see.... I used too much strength, so I can’t move.”

“.....”

“.....”

The silence that oppressed the place. The awkward silence. Looking at the situation, nobody could move.

Dark future could be glimpsed and Suimei tried to smooth over the situation with a dry laughter.

“Hahaha..... What should we do?”

“Ha.... What indeed....”

..... Finally after some time, Suimei recovered to the point he could stand up and after pulling up Lefille who was tangled by her clothes, went down the mountain together.

— At the same time. In the castle even farther north than the land people called “far north”, there was someone who was kneeling towards the throne.

He had the appearance of a human, but upon closer inspection, possessed several features different from a human and was definitely not a being one could call a human.

That being — one of the Demonic Chief, Lishabam, stood up and paid respects to the one sitting on the throne. And knelt again.

The one who was sitting on the throne — a girl wearing flashy clothes decorated with black, watched the man pay his respects and spoke with soft voice while supporting her chin with an arm lying on the armrest.

“.... What is it. I was just about to pleasantly doze off, but why are you here?”

When the girl asked, a man’s somewhat high pitched voice returned.

“I have something urgent to report to your majesty.”

“..... What is it.”

Then the kneeling Lishabam paused for a moment before replying to the girl's question.

"Chief Rajas' presence disconnected just moments ago."

"Ho?"

Disconnected. As if that word was interesting, the girl erased her soft expression and leaned out from the throne.

"I ordered him to kill the hero that was first summoned, correct?"

"Yes, your grace."

"Then it means the hero..... defeated him."

"I believe the possibility is there."

When Lishabam did not agree fully but used a politician-like expression, the girl slightly opened her eyes.

".... Your way of speaking is still the same."

"I agree with that."

".... Well, no matter. Hmm, is that the case... Rajas...."

When the girl muttered those words as if she was chewing on the information, Lishabam raised his face and asked a question.

“What do you plan to do, your majesty?”

“Yes.... I want to go myself, but that’s not possible. Since the vanguard was destroyed, I’ll have to tweak the plan.”

“What plan do you have in mind?”

“First, send Vishuda and Mura to the western area bordering us. Prepare them to attack the humans.”

“Will they move immediately?”

“It’s a deployment I have taken that into calculation as well. The more time I give them, more will be baited.”

When the girl smiled, Lishabam smiled like a response.

“As you command.”

After a short reply, Lishabam disappeared into the darkness. And only the girl was left in the room once again.

— A subordinate lost. But there was no sign of sadness on the girl’s

expression. She simply laughed out loud like a child who discovered something interesting.

“Kuhuhu, a hero summoned from another world. To think Rajas would lose. I look forward to seeing him one day.”

That was right. That girl — Demon King Nakshatra’s laughter echoed throughout the Demon King’s Castle.