

The different
world magic is
too behind!



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異世界魔法は

OVERLAP

Isekai Mahou wa Okureteru! [LN]

The Different World Magic Is Too Far Behind!

vol.3

by Gamei Hitsuji

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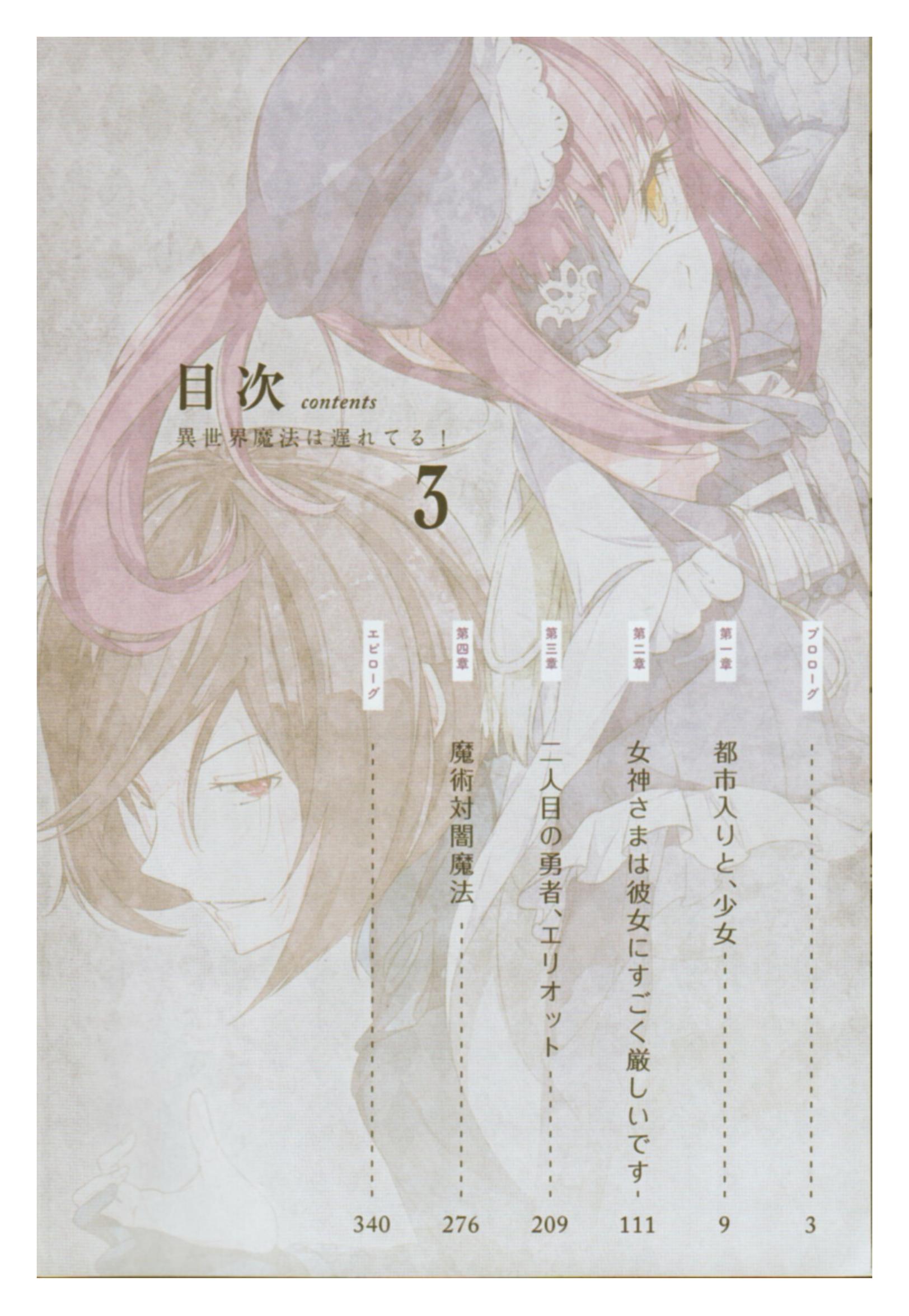
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Prologue

Night. The dim light of the stars and moon shone on an eerily quiet part of the imperial capital. With a completely stone paved ground and an extensive beautiful red brick wall, that place was the upper class section of the capital. The stone paving illuminated by the pale moonlight, and the darkness made the brick buildings seem as if they were covered with red rust. Each building was big and built close to one another, and the fact that it was completely deserted along with the antique look gave off an oppressive feeling.

It was completely different from the normal citizens' wooden houses and stores built from stone. There, a lone man chased after two shadows, one short and one tall.

“You fuckers! Do you think you can get away after doing this to me of all people?”

With spittle flying from the corners of his mouth, the man shouted after the ruffians. Wearing a coat produced by a tailor well known even in the capital, it oozed with the air of money and self-consciousness, but currently his demeanor didn't show any hint of that.

That was also to be expected. Behind the hot tempered man who was shouting, his guards were packed on top of the brick path, burying his body as they collapsed over one another.

“Ugh, someone! Someone else! Anyone! Save me—!”

The man arrogantly shouted, but no one responded. With only that arrogant voice, it passed between the two shadows in front of him.

Before long, the echoes of his angry voice died away, and a single shadow, a tall man clad in a pitch black robe denied his call for help.

“Nobody is coming. No matter how much you call out, nobody can hear you.”

“That, that's not possible... no matter how many streets and alleys we've

passed, in the middle of the imperial capital, for no one to notice is...”

Those dangerous words sent him into a panic. Even though the man knew that the words of the black silhouette couldn't be possible, he had an uneasy premonition. And, the shadow's words were right. No matter how much he shouted, neither the military police that should be patrolling nor the citizens living here came. His outcry and their conversation, it was as if there was a black curtain behind the two of them isolating them from the world.

With this impossible situation, the man sputtered out muddled words.

“Why, why are you doing this to me?!”

“There's no need for someone like you to know that.”

Right after these words were uttered, two shadows approached the man.

“W-wait! How about I hire you guys? I can pay any amount of money.”

“-hou?”

“I just happen to have a man I want to get rid of! How about it? I'll pay 100 empire gold coins as a down payment. 100 for the two you isn't enough? Then 100 each!?!”

For his own sake, the man made such a proposition. To that, the short shadow quivered slightly. It was like he was grinding his teeth, and he snickered. The tall shadow, however, was the one that responded.

“100 coins is quite an amount.”

“It would be to anyone. However, only you guys are worth that much! After all, you made my guard collapse so easily.”

“They were weak.”

“I agree. I paid them so much money and yet, at such an important time they became useless. However, you guys are different. Even though we're in the empire, you were able to corner me this far.”

Affirming the tall shadow's words, the man sang praises about them to try to reel them in. And then, he asked to confirm the deal.

“So, how about it? Not bad don't you think?”

Did he think they were convinced? The man had a disgusting smile on his face.

However, the words he expected didn't come. As if declining, the small shadow approached the man.

"Wha, why?! 100 gold coins, that's a huge amount you know!"

"True. But..."

The voice of the small shadow that spoke for the first time was surprisingly young. It had the sound of a child who was still at the age where you could not tell the gender. To what that person was trying to say, the man swallowed nervously.

"...What's wrong?"

"It's as you said."

"...?"

"There's a person we want to get rid of."

"What about it? Everyone has a person or two they want gone. I don't know who wanted it, but because even you guys are like that, in this way they wanted to hurt me right. So how about it? If you're dissatisfied with the offer then I'll give more and—"

The man didn't refer to what happened before his words. To the man immersed in his own little world, the small shadow began to let off a surge of hatred.

The man froze mid breath for a bit, and then

"...That person, can I kill him."

"...?! YOU! It can't be his doing could it? No, it can't be that you..."

"There is no need to tell you. Do it."

Interrupting the words of the man who realized something, the tall shadow told the small shadow to take his life. And then, the small shadow began to recite a spell incantation.

"Darkness. You, the body that exists in nothingness, sink into our enemy. Imprison the one enslaved by his own greed. Orgo Lecula Ragua Sakunt Labilal

Peibalon...”

From the small shadow’s mouth a spell incantation began to take form. Anyone who heard it would recognize it was a frightening dark magic. But instead of chanting it as expected, it was more like that of an inexperienced student. They were words with no meaning, nay, it was more like an inhuman coarse roar.

“From the given darkness a wicked torment.”

With those words, the dark curtain around the small shadow began to undulate, and what seemed like a mysterious image was shown. In the darkness, magic power swelled up, and from the outstretched arms directing the magic, there was an uncanny squirming feeling. And then, from the man’s eyes, the two shadows, the moon, the stars, everything disappeared.

“Stoo—aaaaaaaaaaa!”

The man’s pitiful scream was swallowed up by the darkness.

Before long, the man’s body was spit out crumpled on the stone pavement. After confirming it with his own eyes, the tall shadow then quietly said.

“Let’s go.”

“...Yeah.”

Then, the two shadows vanished into the darkness. As they left, the unnatural dark curtain silently vanished.

What remained in the alley in the upper class district was just the bodies of the man and his guard.

There was just the twinkling of the stars and the shine of the moon projecting onto the man’s face.

Chapter 1: Entering the city, the young girl

The time is around 10 days after the fight with Rajas. Suimei and Lefille had crossed the border into the Nelfaria empire and arrived at the capital Filas Filia.

While walking on the highway currently under maintenance, a bit after arriving Suimei looked towards his destination. With just a glance at Astel, one could see a unique and massive castle gate towering above the skies.

That castle gate had a height much taller than that of Metel, Kurant city and of incomparable circumference; one could tell the power of the Nelfaria Empire from it. The dimensions of the city were also nearly double that of Metel, and outside of the castle walls were many markets and hotels.

It was a place at the crossroads of three different countries, an important trade hub with roads leading to the east, west, and south. At any rate, it was an extremely prosperous area.

Well, Suimei was originally planning on staying a while in Kurant city but, there was reason for him coming all the way to Nelfaria. Of course, that was none other than Lefille Grakis.

Based on some premonition, they had come with a large number of military forces and were attacked in Astel territory. After defeating Rajas, Lefille, who had used too much of her spirit power, suddenly turned into a young girl like an elementary school student.

As a result, Lefille lost much of her fighting capability, and being unable to wield her large sword, she couldn't go alone to Nelfaria.

Hence, Suimei ended up leaving Kurant city early and accompanying Lefille across the border.

Furthermore, there was the matter of her curse. During the trip, it manifested many times, and despite using restraint and control magic on it every time, the

corruption could still not be purged.

Upon recalling that, Suimei blinked his eyes uncomfortably and his face was somewhat hot. It wasn't really a bad thing but, evidently, he was thinking of something embarrassing.

If someone saw that situation... well it was only because she'd used so much magic but, he would definitely be called a lolicon. Lefille was technically older than himself, but even if it wasn't so.

But, that said...

(Still, it comes down to this)

Seems there's no alternative. After losing her combat power she can't travel alone, and with that curse something bad is bound to happen. So he needed to stay with her until she returned to her original body and could either be released from or at least suppress the curse.

That mazoku thingy that cursed her... I need to take it down.

While staring at her, the thought started to take a proper shape from just a dim outline.

The female mazoku who was with Rajas. Sleep demon was it? In the other world, it would be a succubus type demon. It was known as evil spirit, well known in Europe, that seduces men in their dream and steal away their vitality. It was a being that gained form from a mere shadow due to projections of countless human desires. It seemed they were categorized as mazokus in this world.

To undo the curse, there was a need to eliminate her copies. After all, they had abilities of their own, albeit weaker, so it was decided to aim for them — there was an effective process to it. If they destroyed the clones then afterwards the enemy wouldn't be able to produce them again. If that's the case then the source shouldn't be aimed at first.

That's right, he had come all the way up till now. Postponing his own returning to his original world, he wanted to give her his strength until the end.

“What's wrong Suimei-kun?”

“Huh? Oh nothing really...”

“Fufu, could it be you’ve been entranced by my figure?”

With a mischievous expression Lefille did a little twirl right there. The little adornments on her children’s clothes fluttered in the wind, and she had a satisfied face. For her usually lady-like self, this was an unusual appearance.

That’s to say, pretty much.

“Seems you’re pretty happy about something.”

“Uh, well... yeah”

As Suimei laughed and remarked that, Lefille looked down with a red face. It was like a child who had a secret exposed. Well, if he had to say, she was happily wearing children’s clothes and hiding her embarrassment. The clothes she was wearing, of course, were not her knight’s clothes but clothes bought in Kurant city.

Originally his goal was to buy some easy to move in clothes in Nelfaria for him, but when he bought her clothes, he gave into the salesperson, and now Lefille was wearing some cute clothes. Lefille, to the end, was saying things like “You’re treating me like a child!” or “I’m an adult!” or “Cute clothes... th-theres no way I’d be intereste...”, but the shop assistant wouldn’t take any of that and in the end, put together a bunch of innocent clothes that they bought.

Glancing around at their whereabouts, Lefille inquired.



“Is that fine?”

“The shop assistant also said so but, it’s cute”

“Cute... even if you say that I’m not particularly overjoyed.”

That is what people would call “tsun” but, she walked with a skip. To be called cute, she was probably actually happy on the inside. It’s the same as how boys get pumped up with they’re called cool. As expected, anyone would be happy if they are praised. Seeing this was a heartwarming experience, although how much of it was because she’d become little, he didn’t know.

(Just talking with Lefille casually, it’s the usual Lefille huh)

While carrying a large sword on his back, Suimei looked over at Lefille. Because she had become small, she looked like she had become much more full of emotion in all respects. It’s not really that she had scarce emotions up until now, it’s just that compared to how quiet she was back then, her current childlike character stands out. With her body becoming small, maybe her mind was dragged to a childlike state with it, but there is no way to know for sure.

However, if this is the case, she displays an air appropriate for a child, like one trying to stand on their tiptoes. Well, isn’t that fine though?

While Suimei was thinking that, Lefille suddenly stopped, put on a serious look on her childlike face, and faced Suimei.

“Oh right. Come to think of it Suimei-kun, about my body becoming small...”

“Oh, I completely forgot about the explanation I was saying earlier.”

“I also forgot because of all the other things that were happening.”

As Suimei remembered, his facial expression and voice changed to a serious tone, contrasting to his attitude just a little ago. Because many things had happened up until now, he had completely forgotten about that talk.

Lefille had become little. Before they descended from the mountain, the talk about his guess on the matter.

Suimei’s eyebrows wrinkled and he put his hand on his chin as he began to explain his conclusions.

“Now then, where should I be... ah right. In the world I’m from, there is a line of thinking that everything that people see are all just projections of the actual essence of the thing. The essence, from the idea view, is what the visible thing reflects, a sort of shadow of the idea. Or at least that’s how the idea theory goes...”

“Idea theory?”

“Yep.”

“So uhh... The things that I can see are...”

While nodding her head and muttering to herself, Lefille thought about the previous explanation. It’s hard to completely understand the general idea if you aren’t in that world after all. Now then, how to explain it simply...

“Well, for example. The Yakagi Suimei that Lefille currently is able to see is the one that is shown to you by the projection of the idea of Yakagi Suimei. The other things you are able to sense about me are also things from the information that it lets you recognize.”

“So the idea is the essence? In other words, what is visible and what is the essence are actually different, right?”

“You could say it that way”

“Then, if it’s as you say, and that what we see is what the idea allows us to see, then wouldn’t everyone see differently?”

“Well the idea can potentially contain many individual characteristics, so it can decide to show different appearances when we see it. That’s why, even in things that Lefille and I see as the same, there are parts that can’t be seen. Around us, the trees, rocks, and buildings aren’t the same as each other.”

“...I understand it for naturally created things, because all natural things have a spirit. But how do you explain that for manmade objects? Those are created for a particular purpose, so they don’t really have an encompassing idea right?”

“That’s true. In the case of human created objects, they aren’t consciously created with an idea. But when they are made, the person is thinking “do this” or “do that,” which attaches on many traits. It’s a bit of a stretch, but that

breathes a soul into it. Well, that's for things that physically exist but, the point is that general idea and shape are given by humans."

"So pretty much, people create it with just an outward appearance, but in actuality an idea with various characteristics is also created, and added onto the outward appearance?"

"That's right."

To the enquiring Lefille, Suimei nodded in assent. It seemed she sort of grasped the concept.

Thereupon, Lefille gave an usually grim face and spoke.

"But then Suimei-kun. If we can be explained in that way, then aren't we all sort of sad existences? Aren't we no more than like people whose existences are as thin as paper, that can be interpreted arbitrarily and differently?"

As thin as paper, how fitting. It's quite on point, surprisingly. I guess if it's the first time one hears this kind of talk, that response is kind of to be expected.

"That's right. The world we are in and the us in that world are paper thin existences. Sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, they're all merely interpretations of the essence. Everything we see is in reality a sham, a deception.."

"A deception..."

Seems she can't accept that. No, isn't that to be expected? Things that exist, that can be seen, and yourself, they're concrete things that are here. Words with such existential futility, that deny your own self.

"Well, just believe in this for now. There's no need to understand it in such depth."

"You're saying stupid things Suimei-kun. Isn't this important concerning the matter of myself? There's no way I can just overlook it."

"Well if you say it that way... it's all natural philosophy so personally I don't think it's particularly necessary but... so, what do you think?"

"Well uh, I guess I mostly understand it. But how does that have anything to do with me becoming small?"

To the inquiring Lefille, Suimei closed his eyes briefly and then opened them. Then...

“So far the theory is pretty simple. Existences can pretty much be summarized with that paper person type of idea. But for a child of a spirit and a human like you, Lefille, the theory becomes much more apparent. For a normal human, since the soul and body are tied together, when either is damaged severely it can lead to death. For Lefille, however, since you are primarily comprised of spirit, in addition to the body and soul the spirit is a component, and in some parts even without the spirit the body and soul continue on. Of course though, since the spirit is still part of the idea, and it becomes faint, you will change and your normal existence will also become faint.”

“The reflection of my essence that you and others can see, is losing its consistency as my existence fades. That’s why I’m becoming like this? So the spirit weakening doesn’t change the body and soul. But it’s not unusual that there would be some kind of fluctuation in appearance because the spirit is part of the idea that is projected.”

“Yeah. I think that’s why Lefille has taken on that form.”

Lefille’s body is currently incomplete because the spirit is not present. Therefore, the information is damaged, meaning that what is conveyed to other people will also surely be affected. However, to rid of features like the fatigued complexion, the bodily injuries, and the pale face, her body inevitably had to revert to that of a young girl.

Lefille folded her arms and groaned.

“Being able to understand all of this, your world must have been an unimaginable place. Well, just the fact that you’re from another world is surprising too.”

“Well this year has been the most unfortunate.”

Lefille showed a bitter smile to Suimei who had a disheartened face.

“To hold that much power and not be a hero that saves the world, I think that’s just being cynical really.”

“I don’t think it’s really all that amazing.”

“That is?”

“Well I only defeated a bunch of small fries, right? In that case for a magician it’s not really anything to brag about.”

“In this world there are also magicians that wish for the kind of power you had. Pretty much, I think you’re reaching for ideals that are too high.”

“...ideals huh. Well I guess so”

Suimei thought of the man that embodied his ideals. To just be able to reach his father’s toes, he had greater wishes and higher standards than others. Suimei’s aspirations in regards to his father were still strong.

Maybe she had guessed his thoughts, but Lefille approached and inquired.

“By the way, I’m curious. If it were your father, would he have been able to do the same?”

“Hmm? If it was father then he would have had no problems defeating them.”

“Even Rajas?”

To that question, Suimei thought for a bit. If it was his father then how would it have been. Of course it wasn’t a question of whether he could or not; that he could was a given. Rajas was strong and able, but when it came down to it, his father probably wouldn’t even have to move his eyebrow a millimeter.

Therefore,

“With a single fist he’d send him flying.”

“Wha... a fist??”

To the surprised Lefille, Suimei nodded.

His father was a magician, but he was incapacitated and stuck in a wheelchair. Without legs and his body disobeying himself, he would seem to be no match for Rajas. In the past he’d had a fighting style weaving close combat and magic, and had a stubborn forward facing disposition.

Yes, in battles he was dreadfully formidable. Even in his current condition in the wheelchair, he could fire barrages of magic, and in the time between casts he could evade attacks and slip into the cracks of his opponent’s defenses,

delivering a thrust using his Shinden (TL: Skill name meaning Magnificent Lightning), rendering his opponent into dust.

And then, after using it, he would inevitably gaze at his hand and think.

...Well, my fist still hasn't become weak yet.

"...he would be able to do it. It's him after all. His strength is mindboggling."

If it was father he'd be able to do it. If it was him, then the mazoku that took me quite some time to find the characteristics of, he would have used modern magic to immediately find an effective magic. To be honest, in addition to taking time, I'd been reduced to tatters, while father was strong and wouldn't have had any problem. Although because his legs had gone lame, compared to when he could move freely, he wouldn't be able to do it as easily as one could imagine.

"The mazoku general, that easily...?"

"Yeah. Really, how did he manage to become so strong? Well, I can't ask him anymore..."

Yes, his father could no longer answer. He died. Before his very eyes. Halfway through his path in life, he'd handed over his legacy.

"How do I say it. I can tell your world was extraordinarily different."

"It can't be helped. My world and this world are in completely different states in terms of how far civilization has progressed. The development of technology is different, and people's strength is also different. Lefille is an exception but..."

"That's unpleasant."

"In the end the one that defeated Rajas with one sword was an exception. Carrying a power that's like the natural enemy of magicians."

That amazed voice was from the mystery that is the heart. Even in the other world, Lefille's spirit is an exception. With that, Suimei looked up at the blue sky and said.

"Someday, I'd like to become a magician like that..."

Arriving along the highway to Filas Filia, where many and diverse people came

and went, the two of them finally reached the castle gate and lined up in queue for the city entrance inspection.

Looking up and down the castle walls and gate while shielding his eyes from the glaring sun, Suimei asked Lefille.

“It’s a little late, but what kind of place is the Nelfaria Empire?”

To that far too late question, Lefille frowned as if at a loss for words before replying.

“Really to only ask now? We’ve already been in imperial territory for quite a while. Shouldn’t you kind of already be able to tell?”

“To me everywhere kind of seems the same. If I had to say what’s different from Astel, there’s more people and a greater variety of things.”

Suimei shrugged his shoulders. He was a person from the modern age, and telling apart people here was hard. Maybe Lefille could tell a lot of differences between the interior designs and states of the cheap hotels they’d been staying in up until now, but for Suimei who had come from modern Japan, it was hard to tell the differences between things in this other world. At most he could tell the differences between the clothes people were wearing.

“Didn’t you do some research in the Astel library before we came?”

“I only have knowledge from books, so I’d like to hear Lefille’s impressions.”

“My impressions of the empire huh...”

Lefille thought for a while in response to Suimei’s words. The honest opinion of someone from this world. There wasn’t much to go on.

After a little, she nodded and then answered.

“Well, let’s see. In a sentence, I’d have to say the Nelfaria Empire is strong in terms of national power. Yes.”

Suimei took on a stiff smile.

“...ah. From the books it did certainly seem that way.”

“Right. Nelfaria’s wealth is famous. And their military power is by far the best compared to other countries.”

“But, it doesn’t really feel like it’s to that extent. Is something happening?”

Suimei asked about the doubt he had for quite some time.

Basically the empire was known as a place with many people and lots of influence. In addition, they seemed to constantly exert pressure on the surrounding countries. Yet, the empire also held alliances with countries that had different governing philosophies.

While it’s true that many other countries fell into the empire’s sphere of influence, it seemed to fit together almost too well.

Furthermore, to Suimei, the empire seemed similar to Imperial Japan, bearing a strongly similar image.

“Well that can’t be helped. At first the empire annexed the surrounding countries, but in the war several hundred years ago, they lost a lot of their national power. These days it seems to have calmed down,”

“Calmed down... it seems to be a country with a large ambition, yet even after hundreds of years nothing much has happened.”

“Well, at that time the empire was allied with three different countries, and because of the potential danger of a war, the other countries raised militaries of comparable strength.”

“So even after raising war potential, a war never broke out.”

“Yeah. One of the big reasons is because the hero summoning became a big topic.”

To Lefille’s unexpected words, Suimei put on a dubious face.

“Because of the hero summoning? What does that have to do with it?”

“They were summoned during the war in those days. The heroes.”

“Huh...?”

To Lefille’s explanation, Suimei’s confusion only deepened. Certainly during those days, the Hero summoning was carried out. The nation’s leaders and magicians guilds, due to the highest conference of the salvation church, recognized the hero summons, which for the first time, succeeded. However,

how did a war cause a summoning?

As Suimei's face distorted in deep thought, Lefille gave an answer.

"This is handed down through legends. At the time, the ruler of the Sadius union suddenly instated a dictatorial government and waged war against the surrounding countries, causing mass murderings."

"Oi oi, mass murderings are dangerous. Why would he?"

"Who knows, the legends didn't say that much. I don't know either. Anyways, without discrimination and with great brutality, aiming for power he continued to wage war against everyone in the world, and most people sensed the impending danger."

"Ahh..."

As Lefille spoke, Suimei remembered something in the corner of his mind. Yes, a while ago, the thing with the Astel prime minister Gless and that official Dorothea in the Twilight Pavilion. The story about the tyrant. At that time, 3 heroes were called from another world; it was the tale about the fall of the tyrant. However,

"So the heroes are summoned, and then the empire's aggressive war was also affected...oh."

"Yep, seems like you've noticed. In the war, against the aggressor nation, the fact that you can summon a hero to oppose them was proven. While the empire didn't go as far as to conduct mass murder, if he tried to conquer the surrounding countries, then they would come to agreement, and then..."

"They would summon the heroes, and go after them."

"Yes. The Nelfaria emperor at that time had seen the power of heroes and was considerably scared, thinking that he must not make enemies of the heroes."

"I see."

If it was to that extent, it couldn't be helped. To scare the emperor who had that much power and influence over the rulers of other countries to that extent, the heroes must have had tremendous power.

“There’s that, but the hero summoning was also monumental.”

“Yes. To get the war power to defeat the mazoku and the demon king. Power equal to a whole country. Wouldn’t there be a lot of political maneuvering to get that?”

“Yeah.”

“And because of that, there’s a lot of competition, and the large scale debate has prevented war from breaking out for a long time.”

“Pretty much.”

“Well that said, two years ago around the time of the conflict between Astel and Shaldock, due to the contributions of the Astel Kingdom’s Princess Titania, Astel won.”

Titania’s contributions. To those unexpected words, Suimei’s eyes widened.

“Tia’s?”

“Tia... oh Princess Titania. Yeah she had quite considerable contributions you know.”

“Really...that princess huh.”

With that, Suimei gave a huge sigh of amazement. It was unexpected. The Astel princess, Titania. She had vigor and was tidy, but for that princess that always walked closely behind Reiji to have furiously contributed on the battlefield, it was unimaginable. She didn’t seem to be as powerful as a mage as Felmenia; could she have been hiding it?

... that’s what he thought, but in contributing to the battlefield, there are many ways such as coming up with plans and policies.

(Iya, is it because Tia can fight that nobody said anything about her departure?)

At this time, Suimei remembered the matter before he’d left the castle.

When Reji and his party were paraded out in a line, the king, the prince, and the others at the castle showered them with praise, but Suimei couldn’t remember a single word of caution. In other words, did nobody have any words

of worry for them? Did that mean they had that much confidence in the princess' power?

“...the next person, come into the office.”

While thinking that, he heard a voice from the office. It seemed they were at the front of the line. Suimei and Lefille both ended their conversation and entered.

Entering, there were several people of the military police standing up in a cozy little room, inviting them in.

There, a young man who looked to be in charge of documents and tax collection raised his voice.

“Entering the city?”

“Yeah.”

“Alright.”

Seeing the two of them both nod their heads, the man handed them the documents. They were to write down their names. Upon leaving Metel and entering Kurant, they had done the same thing so Suimei was already familiar with it.

“Then, please write your name here. Next, if you know your social status then please present... Oh oops right, about being able to write...”

To the calm Suimei and the tottering Lefille, the official changed what he was about to say and inquired such.

“Yes, she can write”

“No problem.”

“Sorry about that. Then please write here. Next, please pay the city entrance tax as well as the passage toll and everything should be concluded.”

Suimei, after hearing the official's polite words, started to enter in his name, while the official looked over at Lefille's carefree smiling face. Does he like kids, does he have a nice character, Suimei is too nice, the official thought, and he stooped over by Lefille and lowered his gaze.

“Then, could you, miss, also fill out these forms?”

Hearing that request, Lefille’s eyebrow twitched, and she suddenly made a serious and severe face.

“Official-dono. I am not a Miss. Correct yourself.”

“Ahaha. You’re right. Sorry sorry, Princess-sama.”

“What’s with that response! What kind of childish bullshit are you trying to spout?!?”

To the official’s response, Lefille stood up and shouted furiously. It was the same when they were shopping in Kurant city, upon being treated like a child she would have quite the reaction. To any trivial slip of the tongue she would always have this kind of adamant negation.

“...tch, Suimei-kun! Suimei-kun say something!”

“Wha... me?”

“Yes!”

What could he do to resolve this. There was no way that he could say “Truth is, this child fought with the mazoku and became little.” That kind of response was like what you’d hear in some comedy. Upon hearing Lefille, the official looked at Suimei and gave a wry smile.

“Heh, seems like she’s quite lively. Must be hard.”

“Ah, well... heh.”

In the end Suimei had dealt with the rest. Just when he thought it was over, Lefille came over with arms crossed.

“Suimei-kun! Why did you go along with what he said?”

“Iya... that was uhh...”

What he wanted to say was, ‘it can’t be helped, please deal with it.’ Thinking that, Suimei said bewilderingly to Lefille who was clinging to him.

“A child standing on her tiptoes like this. My little sister that I left behind was also like this so I understand.”

Nodding and grunting in affirmation, it was like he had experience. If you looked around, the other military police officers also had similar smiles due to Lefille's actions; it was quite a warm and light atmosphere.

"Ku... I've had it. Hurry up and finish the paperwork so we can get out of here."

Saying so, Lefille gave up and returned to her quiet self and went back to filling out the paperwork. But...

"Hmm, hmm"

"What's wrong?"

Somehow, while reaching out to the papers, Lefille let out a groan and braced herself. Even when Suimei asked what it was about, Lefille, as if grappling with something in her head, wouldn't respond. She only raised her voice as if she was dealing with a difficult enemy.

"Ku, this sort of thing, this sort of thing!"

"...?"

"Not yet! I can't give up yet! My pride. I can't throw it away!"

Lefille grandiosely declared such. For a while she continued on, until she realized something and sank down in despair.

"Kuh, my hands can't reach the paper..."

With a sound, Lefille sniffled and said so tearfully. Reaching at the middle of the top of the desk, she seemed to be in quite the precarious situation, evidently having trouble writing. Was she really having that hard of a time?

Thereupon, the official came over to her side and gave her a chair.

"Here Missy. Please use this instead."

"! !..."

To the official's kind gesture, Lefille once again grew angry, but...

"!..."

Eyeing the chair and then the desk, slowly she deflated. Eventually, in silence

she depressedly climbed the chair and began to fill out the documents.

Her ponytail swaying back and forth slowly, one could see her sadness. In short, she didn't want to acknowledge that she had become small. Suimei gave her a comforting pat on the shoulder while telling her "patience," and she began to write on the paper using the feather pen.

After a little, around when they finished up the documents, suddenly the door from the inner side of the city opened and a girl entered.

Upon seeing her with a surprised look, the military police turned towards her and saluted.

"Second lieutenant Zandike!"

The official called out the rank of the girl. With slightly red tinted purple hair, somewhat sickly looking skin, a right eye with an eyepatch, and a drowsy looking left eye, she gave off an awfully unusual impression. She was wearing gothic lolita style military clothes with a coat and gloves.

To that girl that looked like she was from another world, Suimei raised his eyebrows a bit.

It was a novel appearance. In the other world he had seen many peculiarly clothed people but, it had been a while since he had seen such self-assertive clothes like these. That didn't mean that it didn't fit her though. It was precisely because it fit her that she seemed out of place.

Did Lefille have similar thoughts?

"C-cute!"

Apparently not. Upon seeing those excessive clothes, she let out her initial reaction.

While Lefille and Suimei were thinking about her clothes, the second lieutenant walked up to the official and spoke with a business-like icy voice.

"Yesterday's name registration, I came to pick it up."

"...Yes ma'am!"

With a clapping sound, the official stood ramrod straight and saluted. Then he

took out a leather bound book from a drawer and handed it over. The girl took the book, quickly scanned it, and then clapped the book shut while saying “good work.”



... Is the Empire's military system different than other countries? The way lower officers referred to higher ranking officers by their rank was reminiscent of modern military but, well, anyway. This girl. She looked to be 12 or 13, no more than a little above that. There weren't many military personnel this young. She was definitely a child soldier.

Did she notice him looking at her? Her sleepy eyes turned and stared at Suimei.

"...to be looking at a soldier that much, is it unusual?"

"Iya, not that really."

The strange thing wasn't that. While Suimei was saying so, Lefille blurted out what they had both been thinking.

"Iya, for a soldier, you're quite young."

Thereupon, after hearing those words, the girl gave Lefille a sullen stare.

"From a child younger than me, I don't want to hear that."

"Wha!! I'm not a little kid!"

Suimei let out a big sigh. This matter again? It seemed like recently every time something was up, it would be this. He would have to give Lefille a good lecture after this.

Shortly after, the two girls gave glares as if they were saying "Why don't we fight," "I accept your challenge."

And then, the two of them went out as if they were going to duel.

Could they actually be planning on fighting?

"Hey, wait Lefille"

"... Suimei-kun stop. I cannot back down from this fight."

"Can't back down huh, that's not really the problem...tch"

Lefille didn't hear him out in the end.

While scrutinizing each other through their gazes, the two of them circled around one another. Moving while crouched like sumo wrestlers, they moved

wary of their opponent's zone of control. After a while, Lefille saw a chance and leapt, and the other girl also matched her movements and lunged in. Just as everyone thought they would collide, the two of them suddenly stopped.

“Fuu...”

“Muu...”

Their noses nearly touching, they glared at one another.

And then they sprung backwards, backing off, and repeated the same movements as before, but this time they seemed to have come to some sort of mutual understanding through their gazes.

--What could it be?

Lefille and the girl. They straightened their backs as if competing in something while continuing to glare at each other. It was supposedly a fight but there was no physical contact, could it be they were competing in height? Suimei tilted his head while ruminating like the others around him, but that didn't seem to be the case. The two of them stood face to face, folded their arms around their chest, and repeated several undecipherable movements.

Finally, Suimei came to an answer and laughed amazedly.

(Ahh. They're comparing their chest.)

Pretty much that was it. They had just begun comparing their appearances and relatively flat chests, which was, well, kind of obvious. To be honest,

comparing was kind of amusing.

But what was with the tense atmosphere before and after they measured up against one another? It was almost incomprehensible. With the amount of force and vigor, was size that big of a plus? That said, after seeing the two of them, the conclusion was that that Lefille was the smaller one.

“So how is it? It seems I’m the more lady-like one.”

“Ku, to lose to a little girl in size”

As Lefille vexingly said that, it was as if the girl was trying to kick a dead horse in claiming superiority.

“Nope. Even if I appear this way, I’m not a little girl. You should call me onee-san. Got it?”

“I, Iya! If I could return to my original self!”

Adamantly shouting in denial of her loss, she was quite obstinate. While originally Lefille had a chest anyone would acknowledge, to bring that up now was a bit childish.

To Lefille’s words, the girl had a dubious expression and then nodded, as if she was thinking “original form? ...ah.”

“You.”

“Wha, what is it?”

“Saying such empty dreams. Stop it. For someone of your age, it’s fairly normal to talk about things like that but, to only talk about something like that, sooner or later won’t you regret it?”

“Fugu!”

So pretty much eighth grader syndrome? (TL Note: When you pretend dream and imaginary stuff is real.) True for someone who doesn’t know the circumstances, it would certainly sound like that when someone brazenly talks that way.

The girl’s words stabbed into Lefille like a knife, and Lefille turned staggering while walking towards the couch.

“Lefille?”

“Suimei-kun. Give me a little bit of space.”

“Iya, I know how you feel”

“Please don’t comfort me. This pitiful self doesn’t deserve that much.”

Suimei smiled as he became sure of what was going on. Lefille slowly sat down, buried her face in her knee, and then didn’t move. It was as if she was getting absorbed into the darkness of mazoku. Or put simply, she seemed quite pitiful today.

Thereupon, the girl, as if all was normal, took a step towards Suimei.

“You, you don’t seem to be from one of the families around here, where from, did you come?”

“Ah, I’m from the west. The girl is the daughter of an acquaintance.”

“West huh. From Astel. Still west. Right?”

“Pretty much.”

With questioning words and eyes, she was considering whether they were from Astel or its surroundings. Upon hearing Suimei’s answer, she closed her eyes briefly while saying “as I thought,” and then when she opened them her sleepy eyes had changed to those like a falcon as she glared at them.

“...Oi”

“Se, second lieutenant?”

From Suimei’s mouth came a low sound while the official let out a bewildered voice.

Because he had said he’d come from an unallied country, was she suspicious of him being a spy? Letting out killing intent as well as magic power, the atmosphere became dangerous.

“For what reason, did you come here?”

“I don’t think there’s any need to answer that but...”

Upon Suimei saying that, the girl increased the magic power she emitted. For a normal person, it wouldn’t be unusual for them to have fainted.

“Se, second lieutenant! Calm down plea--hiii!”

“You’re in my way.”

With that, she gave him a death stare. The official stumbled and collided into the desk. For what reason could she be radiating so much hostility? The rest of the military police were standing stock still unmoving.

The depressed Lefille also tensed up with the dangerous atmosphere and ran over.

“What happened so suddenly?”

“Little kid, this has nothing to do with you. Quietly look away. Go.”

“Quietly... in this tense situation?”

“Yes. This is a matter of the empire with this potentially dangerous man”

“--Hou?”

Lefille drew a cold breath in response to the girl’s words; her current brave appearance completely contrasted to her earlier dejected self as she fired off a relentless tirade.

“Under what pretense are you creating hostility against people who have followed the Empire’s city entrance procedures? Regardless of what you say, giving such poor treatment reflects on how poorly trained the empire’s soldiers are.”

“What did you say?!?”

“What happened to ‘the imperial army will act more strictly and with integrity than any other country,’ Imperial Military Outline paragraph 12, clause 3? Can you say that your current actions are in accordance with that?”

In response, the girl’s face twisted into an unsavory scowl. What Lefille had just said was imperial doctrine. The girl glared daggers at Lefille for a while and then acquiesced in accordance to the regulations.

“...Fine. I will withdraw from here. However...”

Cutting off abruptly, she once again turned towards Suimei and sent a cold gaze.

“--This is the Empire. Any strange behaviors will be...”

To the girl's coercive words, Suimei jokingly asked.

“And if we do something?”

“I'll kill you.”

She replied without hesitation. Very coldly. Was that her normal tone of voice? He did provoke her, but for it to be this far? By Japan's standards, she definitely seemed older than middle school age. To a girl like that who fired off those threats, Suimei had complicated feelings.

Now of course, he understood why pushing her with Japanese-like pride would anger her. In a different culture, ethics would be different, and the draft age would be different than modern times. Of course there would be differences between the civilizations of each world. She would see his pity for child soldiers as mere arrogance. That said, by no means was there any confirmation of the existence of child soldiers here.

For a moment, Suimei's eyes flashed with pity, but they immediately returned to their original joking manner.

“Oh, what a scary little girl.”

“Little girl huh. If it's that kid that says so, it's acceptable. But you should watch what you say lest we end up in...a lawsuit. To the military court, that is.”

With a sullen look, the girl jabbed her index finger at the joking Suimei. The irritated voice that said such was, unexpectedly childish. Meanwhile, Lefille had eyes as if saying “You're still talking...”

“...Let’s return.”

The girl said so, and then left into the city with the name registry.

“Fuu...kind of a bad omen before we enter the city huh.”

With the tense atmosphere gone, Suimei let out a sigh of relief, and the official also let out an even bigger breath.

“You guys should stop with the provocations. After all that’s Second Lieutenant Zandike.”

“Iya, sorry.”

Suimei timidly scratched the back of his head, while Lefille started speaking as if she remembered something.

“I see. I remember hearing that name, is she Liliana Zandike?”

“You know her?”

“Her father is Rogue Zandike of the Seven Swords, a prominent magician in the Empire. Although young, I hear he is one of the twelve Yuuketsu of the Empire.” (TL Note: Yuuketsu seems to be a title with kanjis meaning skilled excellence.)

“Hee. If Mizuki heard she would be delighted.”

Seven swords, one of the twelve Yuuketsu. This was the kind of topic Mizuki liked; powerful people seemed to have associated titles. In Earth, there was also a similar thing that denoted powerful magicians and swordsmen; it seemed this world also had such a thing.

Agreeing with what Lefille said, the official nodded his head.

“Yes, you’re correct. That’s why I think not acting and talking like that would be in your interests.”

To his cautionary words, Suimei replied “I’ll keep that in mind”, and with that, the conversation was over.

The official turned towards the couch and said to Suimei and Lefille.

“I’ll do the final confirmations over there, so please wait a little bit.”

Suimei analyzed the remnants of the girl’s magic power, while Lefille sat down on the chair, swinging her legs to pass by the time. The next person in line was called by the military police, and they entered. While he presented the documents to the next travelers, they struck a conversation with him.

“Oi, did you hear? About the hero summoning in Astel.”

“Yes, Reiji-sama was it? Of course I’ve heard.”

Hearing the name of his friend Reiji, Suimei's ears twitched. Lefille, who knew of Suimei's circumstances, looked over at him.

(Suimei-kun. If I remember right...)

(Ah. I think they're talking about my friend.)

Not many days had passed since they left on the journey yet it was already the talk of travelers. Since the traveler started the conversation with that, Suimei thought, did something happen? Keeping a calm face so that no one would suspect anything, Suimei listened as the two men continued.

"They were recognized by the guild as the highest rank, being the title holder of mastering all elements."

"Ah, being able to use all the elements is amazing. The ruler of all."

"Those two are wonderful. I'm a civil officer but I wish I could be like them."

With that, Suimei couldn't hold in his urge to laugh.

"Bu...ku ku... that's why, stop that..."

"...?"

Seeing Suimei stifle his laughter, Lefille gave him a strange look while the other men swallowed and then declared in an excited tone.

“--Anyway, recently Astel put together an extermination group to face the mazoku that attacked Kurant city.”

“What’s more, they defeated the mazoku general. If I remember right, Rajas was the name.”

The first to respond in surprise was Lefille.

“What?!?”

“Oi oi... what’s the meaning of this.”

Suimei’s face turned into one of dubiousness.

The two men met gazes while the official said “Amazing. Even though they were just called recently they did something like that...” in wonder. They were surprised by a completely different aspect.

Somehow, something strange Suimei and Lefille didn’t know about happened



A horse ran over the rain soaked ground. It was going fast enough that its hooves chopped up the mud as it splashed into the air. The mud splashes reflected the colors of the melancholic ashen skies.

It was a few days before Suimei and Lefille arrived at the Imperial capital, Filas Fila.

After Reiji had heard Suimei's predicament from Gregory and hurriedly departed on a horse, he met up with Mizuki and Titania and crossed the Nelfaria-Astel country border, coming to the woodlands to the west of Kurant city.

Leaving the road, they went to the right into the expansive plains. Near the end, they came to a place where an evergreen forest went as far as the eye could see.

Her horse running parallel to Reiji, Titania held onto the reins tightly and turned to talk to him.

"It was fortunate we were able to borrow some horses along the way. If that wasn't the case then we wouldn't have been able to catch up to Reiji-sama."

With a relieved look, Titania recounted some of the details up until their reunion.

Upon hearing Suimei's crisis and learning of the truth, Reiji quickly set out alone. Titania and the others chased after him, going along the path they used to return to Astel, luckily being able to borrow horses on the way. Halfway along the road they came across Reiji resting his horse.

Turning towards her, Reiji said apologetically.

"Yes...but, are you fine Tia? With this, I've made you go along with my selfish desires."

“It’s fine, considering you were dead set on going. If it’s like that then I can’t help but accompany you.”

“Sorry. This time it’s...”

Yes, this time he also had responsibility. Astel being attacked by the mazoku, and him arbitrarily taking off, he definitely was the cause. To those who he made come with him, he couldn’t pay back his indebtedness.

However, Titania, with a smile that said don’t worry about it, rode up to his side.

“No. The matter this time, it’s not Reiji-sama’s fault. The nobles of our country were the ones that tricked Suimei, and in the first place if we didn’t summon you here, such a thing would not have occurred. Furthermore, being part of the royal family, I am also obligated to help you. That’s why, there is nothing you should feel indebted for.”

“...Yes. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry about me. More importantly...”

Titania looked backwards while riding. Looking concernedly at the person behind them, what she meant was obvious. There, was the girl who had been caught up in this dangerous situation due to his selfish actions.

“Mizuki...”

Unable to ride a horse yet, she clung to the female knight Luka. Still unfamiliar with battle and fear, she still came to a place with the mazoku army even after being told a second time of the danger.

Reiji was actually a little bit proud of her. However,

“Mizuki, don’t push yourself. If you think you can’t fight, then definitely fall back. Okay?”

“But...”

What came from Mizuki’s mouth was the feeling of a girl asking ‘is that really okay?’ Knowing a friend is in danger and coming to help, and yet, withdrawing without doing anything. Her conscience was weighed down by the feelings of helplessness.

To the girl plagued with a sense of responsibility, Reiji and Titania both offered words of comfort.

“It’s fine if you don’t try to do more than you feel you can. It’s not just Suimei, if something happened to either of you, I would...”

Yes. If something happened then she wouldn’t be able to forgive herself, which is why she wanted Mizuki to stand down.

“Reiji-kun...”

“That’s why, if we feel like it’s getting to be too much, can you retreat with

Luka to a safe place?”

“...Alright. You too, don't push yourself. Promise?”

“Ah, promise.”

To that gloomy face, Reiji told a lie to calm her down. Right now, that was the only lie. Of course. About being able to protect that promise, his confidence was because he wholeheartedly believed in it.

Upon seeing their conversation come to a conclusion, Titania came over and inquired.

“Reiji-sama. Do you have any plans after this?”

“Yeah. First we'll check out where we think the mazoku are and wait and see. I don't know how much time we have, but right now we don't know where he is. After we figure out what their plans are we can go around and search where they might be hiding.”

Their top priority was to save Suimei. It would be impossible to directly challenge the mazoku, so there was no need to. Upon determining the situation they would go and search for them.

True, the chance of them coming across him and the mazoku was low but, even still.

“Fufufu, you can't beat the mazoku?”

“What?!? Still, that would be impossible for me too.”

“Admitting it outrightly... Well, however it is, it seems you haven't forgotten the situation. It was needless worry huh.”

“You were messing with me? You're quite shrewd Tia... Well so what do you think?”

“Hmm well. Confirming the state of affairs and then moving is a good idea I think.”

After she said so, Reiji tried asking about something else.

“...Hey Tia. If I were to, say, cut and run right here, what would you do?”

“At that time I would go with you.”

“That is.”

“...I said it before Reiji. To accompany you is my duty. And if Reiji-sama is to fall, then so will I.”

Eyes turned ahead, what could she be looking at? It was as if she was staring at the difficulties that were to come. However, hearing her solemn determination, Reiji forgot his earlier words. In her voice was strength. Was it resolution? In the end, Titania wasn't a just a girl who would blindly follow as she was told. One who would decide to follow him with resolution to the death

when he has matters he must do. That was the girl with him.

“What seems to be the matter?”

“Iya, Tia is amazing. Someone like me couldn’t even compare.”

“...?”

It seemed she couldn’t understand what he meant from his words. She curiously tilted her neck as she rode the horse. As the princess of a country, she seemed to have stronger resolve than he did. Before her resolution, his determination seemed to pick up somewhat. Seeing her figure, he became aware of his own weakness.

But right now, he didn’t have the time to think about that. Shaking off those thoughts, Reiji asked Titania.

“Tia, based on this plan, where do you think we should head to?”

“Yes, why don’t we head north from here. These woodlands west of Kurant city become thinner if you go north compared to south. In addition, it is more elevated as well, making it the most favorable location to confirm the situation.”

“Understood. Then let’s go.”



Reiji and the company made a detour to the north on horseback until they reached a mountainous area surrounded by forests.

Looking up, the sky was filled with dark clouds. The surroundings was gloomy as if predicting for the coming anxiety and uneasiness. Despite there being a forest, there was lack of life to it. Everything that existed there simply lay on top of dark shade and grey background.

Opposite to his hurried manner so far, he drove the horse forward carefully. Having caught wind of what was in front, he slowed down even more. Then a small squad of soldiers from Astel emerged to block the road ahead.

A man who looked like the squad leader shouted towards Reiji's and the companions.

“Halt!”

They pulled on the reign to avoid collision and stopped right in front. Sound of horse neighing spread throughout the forest. The man asked Reiji's companions with a menacing face.

“Who are you! Answer now!”

“We are.....”

As Reiji was about to explain obediently, the elderly knight Gregory, who had been riding behind strode forward and began to scold the soldiers.

“You fools! Do you know who you're blocking the path of! The ones riding here are her highness Titania and the summoned hero, Reiji-sama! Show the

proper respect!”

“What?!”

The soldiers immediately backed down at Gregory’s reprimand. After several fidgeting glances to confirm, the soldiers perhaps realized they had seen them before. The scenes in their memory and the person in front of their eyes matched, the soldiers knelt as if to make up for their previous rudeness and showed proper respect to Titania and Reiji.

“I, I apologize. Please forgive my rudeness.”

“It’s fine. You seem to be on guard duty. Are you from the Kurant city garrison?”

“Yes. We are in Duke Hadorius’ army.”

The soldier was honoured to answer Titania’s question. The moment they heard the answer, a strange atmosphere developed amongst Reiji’s party.

But whether Titania was used to hiding her expression or not, she did not appear taken back at all.

“So Duke Hadorius is there.”

“He is camped just ahead.”

“Guide me to him.”

The soldier answer “yes” and guided the way with other soldiers without even wiping the sweat off his brows.

The soldiers’ boots made the leaves rustle. Titania followed behind them. The horse that Luca rode, which had been following behind Reiji so far, leisurely approached him. Then Mizuki, who had been riding behind Luca, leaned over to Reiji and whispered.

“Reiji, if it’s Duke Hadorius.”

“Yeah, the noble who used Suimei as a bait. I didn’t expect him to be somewhere like here.”

“S, so we’re going to the place that person is at.....”

“.... Yeah.”

The mortal enemy who was waiting for them somewhere. When he squinted his eyes open, as if the mortal enemy was standing right in front, Mizuki seemed to freeze up with anxiety. They were about to meet the man who sent their friend into a trap. It was to be expected.

Reiji thought so, but Mizuki spoke sternly with a worried expression.

“.... Reiji, you can’t rush this. We might have Tia, but we don’t know what kind of backlash will happen by harming a noble.”

“Ah.... Yeah, I know. Thanks for worrying about me, Mizuki.”

Perhaps Mizuki was worried that he couldn't hold himself back and pounce at the man. But there was no way that could happen. It must not happen. Even if he did not care what would happen to himself, Gregory, who gave that information, could be in danger. For Gregory, who gave him the information despite knowing the possible dangers, he needed to restrain himself.

Soon, amidst the Oak tree forest, there was a place with a group comprised of knights, soldiers and mages. There were not much room to stand around thanks to the uneven terrain and the muddy ground the rain created not too long ago, however they stood in formation nevertheless. How disciplined they must be.

At the centre of that place was a middle-aged man wearing pitch black armour who appeared to be the commander.

His age was around forties, or at least the same as Gregory, perhaps younger. He sported cleanly trimmed beard and a scar stretching from his forehead to the left cheek.

A tall man standing nearly two meters tall with sturdy build. His existence alone was overbearing enough to make people tense.

He was the kind of a person who made sure that people knew who the leader of the group was.

The squad that guided Reiji's companions moved towards the formation to alert their arrival. They appeared to exchange several words back and forth with

the man who appeared to be the commander. Then the man motioned with his hands to the densely packed knights and soldiers around him. Upon the man's command, a path immediately opened up.

The man approached Reiji's companions through the path. Without hesitation, he kneeled before Titania with all his martial aura and showed the gesture of subordination.

When Titania spoke "Rise, Duke Hadorius.", the man --- Duke Hadorius, stood up.

"It has been a long time, your highness. The soiree several months ago was last when we've met."

"It has been a long time indeed, Duke Hadorius. You still seem to have the fearsome aura around you."

"Please, something like this is nothing but mere breeze for your highness. Pardon my overstepping, but your faithful subject, Lucas de Hadorius, wanted to provide your highness with cool wind to clear away the unpleasant rain...."

"That's enough. You worry unnecessarily."

The people gathered around Titania and Hadorius closed their mouth after hearing the conversation.

The cool, but hate-filled tone. Titania's greetings and relentless choice of words were far from friendly as well. Perhaps she was sending a stare filled with contempt from atop of the horse.

There was a different kind of tension around the cold exchange of words. But Hadorius took it neither seriously nor jokingly with an expressionless face.

“You’re the same as ever, your highness--- The one who accompanied you there must be the summoned hero, Reiji Shana-sama?”

“Yes.”

When Reiji answer, Hadorius looked over. It was the threatening glare of someone with arrogant eyes.

Was that what Titania called fearsome aura. Reiji stared back while thinking that with determination to not lose.

‘This man...’

That man was the one who placed Suimei in danger. He was the man who never doubted his action and showed off arrogance. Reiji was angry at the man who committed unspeakable evil deeds, but suppressed his anger.

.... Soon, Hadorius closed his eyes and opened his mouth.

“I was late in greeting you, hero-sama. I am the one who oversees the western territory under his majesty’s command, Lucas de Hadorius. I heard the news that mazokus were invading and was on my way there with an army.”

Hadorius announced himself and his intentions arrogantly, and continued.

“Your highness Titania, and dear summoned hero. What takes you out here in place like this?”

Upon Hadorius’ question, Reiji gave the answer he had been preparing.

“..... The way mazokus have been acting up made me worry about Astel, so we hurried back from Nelfaria Empire.”

“Is that so. You even have the royal order as well, I apologize for inconveniencing you.”

“No, this is something that I, as a hero need to do as well.”

When Reiji replied in textbook manner, Titania asked Hadorius immediately.

“Duke Hadorius, are the mazokus ahead?”

“It seems so, your highness.”

“Then were you strategizing just moments ago?”

“Yes, your highness. I was planning on moving out as soon as the skirmishers returned.”

Skirmishers. It commonly referred to scouts. They were doing the work he had been planning to do himself. Hadorius probably already scouted the

number of opponents and was starting to go on the offensive.

But feeling something was off, Reiji interjected himself into the conversation between Hadorius and Titania.

“This army seems... small for attacking mazokus.”

That was right. The army assembled here was strangely tiny. Roughly between a hundred to two hundred men. It was sorely lacking to attack an enemy numbering more than a thousand.

“Hero-sama, this is not the whole of my army. I have placed men to the north and south to attack from multiple directions and there are many more waiting in ambush around here. You do not need to be worried.”

“Is that so. It seems my worries were unfounded.”

“It would be right to discuss it with the soldiers over from the Metel’s side then advance, but after preparing for the battle and that storm, along with considering that Kurant City and Metel is currently divided, we could not afford any more delays. That is the situation. I ask you to understand this.”

Upon Hadorius’ reply, Reiji announced his planned course of action.

“We plan on attacking as well when the skirmishers come back.”

“Youth is a great thing. But it is fine to just watch the battle unfold.”

Hadorius replied. Whether Hadorius was mocking him, he could see the slightly raised corner of Hadorius' lips with his two eyes.

"I refuse. How about the Duke watch? I am a hero. I simply do what I must do."

"Huu, so be it. This Lucas cannot guess what kind of plan the hero-sama has in mind, but if you plan to attack head on, I shall accompany you until there."

Hadorius wiped the rigid expression off his face and laughed heartily for the first time. Reiji's body tensed up at those words. Did that man know why they were there?

He felt an urge to look back at Gregory but kept staring at Hadorius.

Then Hadorius stated "Please rest a bit until the skirmishers return." he said and returned to his soldiers.

Was he simply walking away? His attitude towards the princess and the hero was extremely rude.

Titania squinted her eyes and spoke.

"He's still the same."

Both Reiji and Titania looked, no, stared down at Hadorius, who was walking away.

“It’s the first time I’ve heard Tia talk to someone like that. You don’t like that man?”

“It’s just as you’ve seen. I like that he does not try to curry favours, but I dislike his attitude of looking down on people.”

Her evaluation had a surprising side to it.

“... Tia, you don’t like losing, do you?”

“Eh?! That... Rather than that, what did Reiji-sama think after meeting Duke Hadorius?”

“It was unexpected. For him to be that kind of man.”

Reiji spoke his honest feelings. Lucas de Hadorius. Since he was a man who pushes others into a trap with cowardly methods, there was an image of an evil and corrupt noble --- an image of morbidly overweight racoon, but the expectation had missed its mark.

Of course in a way that the actual person was much worse than expected.

“You thought he was going to be an intolerable coward, but he turned out to be even worse of a person than you’ve expected?”

“I wouldn’t take it that far... But Tia, you really don’t like that person.”

“I think it’s the same for you, Reiji-sama. Today is the first time you’ve used words like “that person”.”

“Yeah....”

When Titania pointed it out, Reiji thought so as well. Thinking back on it, he was using the word so naturally. He planned on being careful, but it seems the hatred came out either way.

At that moment, Mizuki asked Titania with a troubled expression.

“...Is, is that person fighting as well? That person’s a noble, right?”

“Duke Hadorius’ family is a famous martial family even within Astel. So Duke Hadorius is quite skilled.”

Was that so. From the uncommon pressure to the courage to fight in the frontline, and even his physical ability. There was no ground to doubt he was a martial man.

Meanwhile, Mizuki spoke something off topic with a sharp expression.

“Huh, he had a big scar on his face!”

“Yes, he got that scar from a battle a long time ago. I’ve never seen it myself, but they say he’s quite skilled.”

After Titania said that, she turned her horse around skillfully and faced everyone. Then while being careful not to be overheard.

“As you’ve seen from earlier, Duke Hadorius is not someone you can underestimate. Reiji-sama, Mizuki-sama, do not trust that man. And Luca, Lophry, assist them well.”

When Titania ordered them, the two knights immediately replied “Yes”.

“And Gregory. Follow me just as you’ve done so far.”

“But your highness....”

“Don’t worry. Even if Duke Hadorius tries to do something, I’m here. So rest easy.”

“.... Princess-sama... Thank you.”

Gregory bowed his head down after hearing the words of reassurance from Titania. For some reason, Lophry became emotional, started tearing up and Luca sent gazes of admiration towards Titania.

“Tia, you look cool today.”

“I guess.”

“If you start liking her for that, it’s going to be a problem!”

“Eh? Huh?”

When Reiji became flabbergasted at those words, Mizuki turned her face away. Luca, who was riding in front of Reiji, made similarly confused expression.

That was when a man looking like a soldier ran out from the forest with several other men. They must be the skirmishers. Looking at them heading towards where Hadorius was, Reiji and the companions headed to the centre of the army as well.

Hadorius asked the soldier who kneeled as soon as he arrived.

“What’s the status of the mazoku army?”

“Yes! I will report now! The mazoku army----”

The soldier started reporting while gasping for air and without even wiping the sweat off his brow. The moment before the report began, everyone including Hadorius held their breath. Everyone drew the extent of mazoku army and what kind of mamonos they brought in their own head.

Then what the soldier announced immediately was...

“--- was wiped out.....”

That was the surprising truth.

“-----?”

“Wiped out?”

“..... What, there was an army of over a thousand of them. But even before fighting, they were wiped out?”

Following Reiji’s voice, Hadorius’ surprised voice rang out.

When Reiji looked to his side, there was a man with a shocked expression. Perhaps even a man like Hadorius never expected to hear a report like that. Murmuring noises from around them could be heard as well.

Then Titania...

“Are you certain?”

“Eh, yes....?”

The soldier seem to have just realized her presence. He looked confused for a moment, but continued after being hurried along by Hadorius.

“It, it was unmistakable. There was nothing but dead mazokus in the plain.”

“How can that be...”

Titania’s voice ladened heavy by the end of her sentence. It was not a bad news, but the mystery weighed too much. Everyone stood shocked and not knowing what to say.

Suddenly, Hadorius turned his head towards Titania as if he had an idea.

“Your highness, perhaps.”

“... No, we were coming from the direction of Nelfarian Empire. It was opposite to the direction mazokus had shown up from, and moreover, why would we need to put up this kind of an act if we did do it?”

“... I asked a short-sighted question.”

Hadorius admitted the folly of his question.

Hadorius thought that Reiji had annihilated the mazokus. Hadorius was a man of this world after all. Ergo, he found hope from heroes. It was not a stretch to think that since a hero was there.

It was not a theory Reiji could ever have thought of.

Titania hurried Hadorius, who seem to have sunk into deep contemplation.

“Duke Hadorius, let us go there first.”

“... Yes, your highness. Let us.”

--- Reiji expected he would run into unbelievable things before he arrived at that place. Disgusting smell prodded his nose and something unknown heated

the air. Reiji could feel chills going through his skin.

Did the others not feel it or did they not express it even though they knew? Everyone appeared to keep their cool besides the soldiers who were filled with nervousness. Hadorius appeared relaxed and Titania had a wary gaze.

In moments, he dropped his sight to below the horse. He rubbed his eyes wondering if the light refraction from the water drops that had fallen off leaves made it look red.

Soon, the trees disappeared and the plain appeared.

“..... This is.”

Sound of Hadorius' voice and gulping. When Reiji's group arrived at the place the skirmishers reported the mazokus to be at, there was a sight that made everyone doubt their eyes.

“What is this....”

Even Reiji could only sigh with fear filled expression at the scene that could not be described.

They had followed the skirmishers into a great plain with a mountain range visible at the edge of the horizon. Great fissures in the ground, ground that had melted at high temperature and then frozen again, gigantic iceberg, some unknown sinisterly dark swamp and countless remains of mazokus strewn about.

--- Just what had happened here. Below the shining ray of light peeking through altostratus clouds were ghastly uncommon scene and corpses. It was a distressing sight that could not possibly be a natural disaster.

Distressing was the correct choice of word. It was a ghastly sight that they could almost hear the mazokus' singular cry before death if they put their ears to it. Even if they were the enemy, they could feel a slight bit of sympathy for those who died in such terrifying manner.

It was a place that could be compared to hell, but the hell had already passed.

Reiji, who had been following the skirmishers, knights and Duke Hadorius so far asked anybody he could get his hands on.

“This, this is a path....?”

The path in front of his eyes was split in half in a straight line. There was no blood, flesh, sign of being carved away or destruction. It was clean. As if something had taken this path, it was only split in a straight line. The road extended towards the foot of the mountain and there were corpses littered everywhere along the side of the road.

Mizuki, who had been following so far, murmured without a specific conversation partner.

“Remains of magic....?”

“Mizuki?”

“There’s no mistake. This is definitely remains of a magic.”

Was she certain because she was confident? Mizuki looked at the unnatural ice and materials that weren’t burnt all the way with a fearful expression. She pointed at them and said they were the result of magic.

Titania exclaimed at Mizuki’s certainty.

“Mizuki, you noticed....”

“Yeah, it was faint, but there’s leftover mana and there’s signs of spells by the ice or burning things over there.”

“.... You’re right.”

When Reiji watched closely with all his concentration, he could feel the [trace]. He didn’t know until moments ago, but once he realized they contained magic diagrams, his thoughts became clear as if a fog had been lifted off.

But for a lingering fire or ice to have individual magical diagrams was incredible. The diagram, a fundamental for a magic, was only needed for a single moment to take down mazokus. And to be this detailed as well----

“Mizuki, this is...”

“The formations are so highly developed I don’t know what to say... It might not be the kind of magic we use.”

“That too, but to use this kind of high level spells so many times.”

--- It was not normal. Perhaps a large army destroyed the mazokus. That kind of absurd theory popped into Reiji’s head and disappeared immediately. Looking at the scene, it was impossible to think an army had clashed here. In a clash that big, there would be the dead from the other side as well. But there were none. Only the mazoku bodies covered the plains as far as the horizon stretched. It was fundamentally impossible to form a large army with only high class mages as well. The only conclusion was that this was an aftermath of something incredibly powerful having swept through here.

The horses continually neighed as they were sensitive to surrounding atmosphere. They reined the anxious horses and headed through the small path that had yet to dry, but it was Titania who spoke in surprised voice this time.

“This is.....?”

Following Titania, Duke Hadorius’ voice could be heard.

“Even a Behemoth....”

Reiji and the companions turned their head towards a voice that rang out like a groan. What lay there was the remains of a gigantic mamono.

“S, so big....”

Mizuki’s voice filled with either fear or surprise could be heard.

Its total length was about two hundred meters. It had thick and wrinkled skin that reminded of a black jeep. The limbs and horns were gigantic even for that huge body.

Its open bloodshot eyes inspired fear. Rather than fear deriving from strength, it was an ominous kind of feeling that chilled your spine.

But for whatever reason, due to the magical power that Mizuki mentioned, the creature's body was half-buried at a slant in the ground.

"It's a Special 2nd Class Demon Beast. To think even this kind of mamono was taken down."

Titania revealed her shock even without explaining about the categorizations for mamono. She let out a flabbergasted sigh.

Seeming how they were more surprised to see this Behemoth than any other mazokus or mamono, it must be quite a formidable beast. The soldiers, Gregory and even Hadorius had a serious expression on their faces.

While everyone stood shocked, the soldier who was sent to scout ahead returned.

The way he staggered was not because he was tired, but because of the blood curdling sights all around him.

"R... reporting..... All the mazokus are annihilated. Their number is."

The crowd had to wait while swallowing their dry saliva for the kneeling soldier's next words.

Rather than making people wait, the soldier looked rather perplexed at what he was about to explain as well. That was when Hadorius urged the soldier on with a frozen expression.

“How many.”

“Yes! There's roughly over ten thousand.....”

The time froze. Everyone gasped at the sound of ten thousand, which made them doubt their own ears.

When everybody came to their senses, Hadorius spoke with a shocked voice.

“T, ten thousand....?”

“B, but even if there were ten thousand mazokus, the number of corpses do not match.”

“I apologize, but considering the traces of mazoku and mamono movements and the area of the attack, I believe that number to be reasonable.”

Hadorius spoke with a harsh face after listening to the scout's report.

“To think it's not around a thousand....”

It was a hurried voice combined with shock. He had imagined what would have happened if he fought against that army. Even for a worst case scenario, that kind of number was beyond imagination.

When Titania looked at Hadorius, he corrected his expression.

“To mistake the size of mazokus. If they attacked Metel or Kurant City, it sends a chill down my back-----.”

“Just who do you think did this in this short amount of time. Do you have any guesses, Duke Hadorius?”

“... I am unsure, but roughly about a week ago, there was a day when it thundered extraordinarily. I believe that was the day when the mazokus were destroyed.”

“The day when it thundered....”

On Titania’s murmur, Hadorius said in suspicious tone “The bishop from the Church of Saviour said the goddess was angry.”. Did this world think the will of the heaven manifested in the form of lightning as well?

But did goddess Arjuna really destroy them? No, there was no way that kind of miracle could happen. If it was possible, then there was no need for a hero in the first place.

The mystery deepened. They could guess when, but what happened

remained unsolved.

Suddenly, Mizuki murmured with a worried expression.

“Is Suimei doing alright?”

“I wonder how he’s doing....”

Reiji became disturbed looking at Mizuki who had her head down in a worry.

How would Suimei be doing? It would be fortunate if mazokus were annihilated before he ran into them---

“A mazoku! There’s a survivor!”

“-----?”

Everyone turned around to the voice that came from the rear of the column. A soldier who was searching around the surrounding screamed out the report of a mazoku. Was it buried amongst the corpses or did it come from somewhere nearby? Several mazokus that appeared to be a remnant furiously closed the distance.

The one who shouted first was Hadorius.

“---- They are approaching! Battle formations!”

He drew his sword from atop of a horse and commanded the soldiers. The soldiers immediately sprung to action upon the command. Soldiers carrying spear moved forward in a formation and mages started casting spells from behind them.

Continuing after Hadorius' orders, Reiji looked at Luca.

“Luca-san, I trust Mizuki to you!”

“Understood!”

“R, Reiji-san?!”

“I'm going to fight. Mizuki and Luca, wait here. --- Hyaa!”

“Yes! Reiji-sama!”

“Tia, prepare a spell behind me! Let's aim for the flank from the horseback!”

Reiji drew his sword as well after hurriedly shouting the words.

What he could see was the mazokus and soldiers who were prepared for the attack. Reiji drove his horse aiming for the flank. Following him was Titania, Lophry and Gregory. Hadorius continued to command his soldiers meanwhile.

By the time Reiji's group's horses caught up, the soldiers were already surrounding the mazokus. The soldiers carrying a spear kept the mazokus back

while the mages poured on the magic. It was a battle that went the way Hadorius commanded and showed his excellent commanding skills. The soldiers were proficient and at this rate, they could contain the mazokus without any casualties.

No....

It may have appeared that way, but the mazokus were determined. Their main army was destroyed and they stood as a suicide troop.

Suicide troop. You could only confirm their existence in wars. Even though the loss was apparent, some soldiers resigned themselves as dead and furiously attacked with single minded determination to kill as much enemy as possible. They did not fear death as what awaited them either way was death. The soldiers who accepted their death were strong and difficult to face.

There was even a saying not to fight the suicide troops. That was how dangerous they were in the battlefield.

The determination to throw their life away soon created a hole in the formation and the fence of soldiers collapsed.

The mazokus ran wild as if trying to take as many people with them to the death, and soldiers started to waver amidst the chaotic melee.

“Retreat!”

Hadorius rode in with his large black horse when he saw the situation. He cut down several mazokus in half while commanding the soldiers, but few slipped

past right by him.

Towards Luca and Mizuki.

“Damn it!”

They broke through. By the time he thought this, it was already too late. Mazokus soared towards Mizuki in an instant. Even with Mizuki, it was two versus three. The number was unfavourable for Luca to be fighting while defending her.

“Gregory!”

As soon as he heard Titania, Gregory turned his horse around. But----

“Kuuuh! Mizuki-sama, hold on.”

“Yeah!”

Luca tried to control the horse to escape, but the muddy ground held onto the horse’s hooves. Normally, mud were just trivial hindrance, but it was critical in situations like this. The horse couldn’t move right.

“Damn it--- Stain Scarlet!”

Reiji cursed while casting a fire magic. Titania joined in, but it couldn’t finish off the determined mazokus.

If it continues like this! It’s dangerous.....

The mazokus got closer to Mizuki and Mizuki towards mazokus as well.

He used magic, but mazokus still ran forward while covered in fire. She was way too far to go help. With an ominous feeling, a chill ran down his back.

That was when a white vine of flame flew in from the corner of the vision. Pure white flame. It surrounded the mazokus that were intent on attacking Mizuki and Luca.

The white flame sputtered towards the air and turned the mazokus into ashes in a moment.

“Hmm....?”

“This magic is?!”

Reiji and Titania’s voice were that of surprise and realization.

The moment they realized what that flame was and what it was for, a distant horse hoof beat could be heard. Someone was approaching on horse, and that speed was extraordinary. Did someone cast a spell on their horse. It was as fast as a comet.

When Titania confirmed the person who was now close enough to be seen clearly, she let out an excited scream.

“---- White Flame-sama!”

That was it. The person who was riding towards Reiji's companions was the young royal magician, Felmenia Stingray.

Reiji shouted towards Felmenia.

“Teacher? How did you get here?!”

“Hero-sama! We'll talk later! Remaining mazokus first!”

“Ah! Yes!”

Upon Felmenia's words, Reiji turned his horse around and charged towards the remaining mazokus.

When he rode by one and cut it in half with a single strike, Hadorius' voice rang out again.

“Magicians, prepare for the second attack!”

It was a confident command. The soldiers showed extraordinary skill to surround the mazokus and the mazokus were promptly annihilated by magicians who were waiting.

Because of the magic that struck all at once, dust and smoke blurred the area. There were no more mazokus. Beyond the blurred areas, there were no signs of life.

Soon, Felmenia dismounted and approached.

“Princess-sama, Reiji-sama, and Mizuki sama. It has been a long time.”

Titania nodded with her eyes closed. Mizuki and Reiji responded.

“A long time, teacher.”

“Felmenia-san, thank you. I lived thanks to you.”

Felmenia simply stated “I was simply passing by. I’m glad you’re not harmed.” and held Mizuki’s hands softly. So Mizuki made a smile and conveyed her thanks once more.

After that, Felmenia exchanged several words with Hadorius and bowed her head. Did they know each other? There was no friendliness, nor hatred like Titania. It was simple business-like greeting.

Titania once again expressed her gratitude towards Felmenia.

“White Flame-sama, thank you. But what brings you here?”

“Hmm, his majesty decided to fire you from the position of Royal Magician?”

Felmenia calmly replied to Hadorius who had interjected himself into the conversation.

“Yes. Currently, rather than as a Royal Magician, I am acting directly under his majesty’s command.”

“His majesty’s command...”

It was beyond what Reiji expected. But there must be a reason for King Almadaeus to give out direct orders. Which meant----

“Was it to help us?”

“Eh? No, it was something else....”

“Then why?”

“T, there is a s, special situation.....”

“White Flame-sama. What is it?”

Felmenia mumbled at Titania’s words..... Rather than that, she looked unsettled. They didn’t know what, but was it something so difficult he could not even reply to the princess. It was a possibility since it was the king’s direct command.

That was when a soldier came running while gasping for air.

“R, reporting!”

Everyone tensed for a moment thinking another group of mazokus appeared,

but it was strange. For some reason, the soldier who came to report came out from the forest they were just in. There were no mazokus there.

Hadorius asked.

“What is it?”

“The Empire’s third princess, Graziella Filas Reiseld just penetrated the border with an army!”

An alarming news. Titania’s face turned blue at the soldier’s report.

“What?! Princess Graziella?!”

“Yes! The princess broke through the border patrol by force, passed through Kurant City and is headed this way.”

“How could that be. Why.”

“--- Shouldn’t it be obvious? White Flame.”

Titania turned around in surprise at the voice that flew out.

A woman appeared from amidst the smoke.

“Reiji! Another person we don’t know appeared! What do we do!”

“I’m not sure. I don’t think there’s anything we can do....”

No. There was nothing they could do. Reiji responded chidingly towards Mizuki who sensed ominous atmosphere and looked with nervous expression.

There was a woman riding a horse.

The person who appeared with a taunting voice from the fading smoke was a young woman wearing flashy medals and a coat hanging on her shoulder. Long blond hair with waves and the corner of her mouth raised in confidence. She had the special light of someone who was born to command others from above.

She was with a group wearing military clothes that could be either her comrades or subordinates.

But what bothered him the most was.

How did nobody notice even though she rode all the way here?

They were riding on top of horses just like his group. But there were no sounds of horse hooves. From this distance with horses, it was impossible.

As if Felmenia heard Reiji’s murmur, which was gripped in mystery, she answered.

“Reiji-sama the person over there is Nelfaria Empire’s third princess, Graziella Filas Reiseld. And she is referred as “Geo Maripex”, the strongest earth-type

mage in the Empire. Hiding the sound of horse hooves is nothing for her.”

“But why would she go all the way to hide the sound....”

“I don’t know that far. It doesn’t look like she plans on attacking us though....”

Reiji and Felmenia frowned at Graziella’s entrance.

Then, Titania approached Graziella with a serious expression.

“It has been a long time, your highness Graziella.”

“It seems so Titania. I’m glad you’re doing well.”

Opposite to Titania, who was showing proper respects in greeting despite her anger, Graziella replied in an overbearing tone. Titania replied with an advice-filled tone as if she could not stand Graziella’s attitude.

“Your highness said it’s been a long time, but shouldn’t there be something you did before that?”

“Something? I don’t know what you’re talking about. Did something happen?”

“---- Even for an allied country, it is not a proper act to cross the border with an army unannounced. Do you have any explanation for this act?”

What came back at Titania’s sharp glare was Graziella’s mocking tone.

“Yeah, normally it would be something to apologize for. ---- But don’t you think we’re on the same boat?”

“..... What do you mean?”

“I don’t think it’s such a difficult concept that it needs to be explained.”

The kingdom’s princess’ and the empire’s princess’ gaze collided. Soon, Graziella snorted and.

“A mazoku army appeared in your country. You need to worry about possible effects it might have on neighboring country, but trying to take care of it without even letting us know doesn’t seem like the proper attitude of an allied country, don’t you think?”

“That is... because the mazokus advanced too quickly, we didn’t have the time.”

“You seem very prepared for not having enough time. Furthermore, you and Astel’s hero were in my country. To try to play it off as not having enough time, the princess of the Astel Kingdom is more thick skinned than I thought.”

“.....”

Titania’s faced crinkled. Graziella appeared to be amused by Titania’s expression and laughed heartily.

“But you came to my country while the subjugation for demon king was ongoing. You probably didn’t know what was happening back home. So----”

“So you want us to remain silent about this incident? But you cannot justify having illegally entered with an armed group--”

“I learned that an allied nation is in danger and came to help in a hurry. It’s plenty justifiable. Are you perhaps planning on denying that as well?”

Graziella pressured on with even more overbearing tone than before. To come to help probably meant she planned on surprising the mazoku army from a flank. Considering the situation, that conclusion made sense.

But Titania still glared at Graziella with a pained expression.

“... We will officially lodge a complaint about this incident at a later date.”

“Do what you will. But since this incident is due to the mazoku advance, wouldn’t the Sadius Alliance, Autonomous District and the Papacy be on our side?”

Graziella did not waver once. Who was the one truly thick skinned. Graziella spoke as if she did not care what advice Titania had to give. Then she turned her head to look at Reiji. The sharp gaze of the overbearing woman scanned him from top to bottom.

“Are you Astel’s summoned hero?”

“.... Yes.”

“You don’t seem the friendly type.”

“This is just how I am.”

Reiji bowed lightly while replying.

She was not someone you could show openings to. He felt it and talked to her in business-fashion. Graziella stared at Reiji’s face as if she was feeling not too happy about it.

“You have a clean face.”

“.... So?”

“I’m just saying it because you don’t have any scar on your face. I was wondering if you had nothing to do with fighting over in the other world. I’d say, somewhat unreliable for a man called a hero.”

To say something like that on a first meeting. Should it be called honesty? It was extremely rude.

Titania, who had been simply listening so far, came forward with an angry expression.

“Princess Graziella, do you not think you’re out of line to the hero who will

save the world?”

“Fu, I was simply saying what I felt. Plus, this massacre, I don’t think your army could have done something like this.”

She looked at Titania with glowing eyes as soon as she said it.

“---- So, there were mazokus, correct? What happened to them?”

“... I am uncertain. What did happen indeed? I do not know.”

“Ho?”

Graziella frowned when Titania answered coldly. She did not know either. There was no way to explain and Titania probably did not wish to say it either. She was the type who did not like losing.

At that moment, Reiji looked at Hadorius, who had been worrying him. For some reason, he had been spectating in silence since the start. Considering his personality or stance, he would have gotten a word or two in, but he did not complain as Astel’s nobles and simply stood in silence since Graziella showed up. What was he thinking with his nonchalant attitude?

Or perhaps he was different from how Reiji had thought him to be. Still, he could not shake off the feeling of strangeness.

Just as Reiji sparked a doubt in his heart, something unnatural appeared.

They all felt the unnaturalness and turned to look.

Felmenia was the first one to look up at somewhere.

“This is.....”

Could she ascertain the speed and direction so quickly. When they stared at something flying rapidly with long silver hair, Hadorius' voice could be heard.

“Was there another remnant. But---”

“---- Stronger than mazokus from before.”

The one who finished Hadorius' sentence was Reiji. They understood the seriousness of the situation and prepared for battle. The mazoku's mana that could be felt was powerful. That was right. It was incomparable to any mazoku they had fought until now. And that mazoku was definitely headed to their direction.

As if determined to kill as many humans as possible like the mazokus from before.

It was coming. Nobody needed to say it out loud. In that moment, a thunder struck the ground in front of Reiji's group and loud noise exploded out.

Dust laden with water drops rose in smoke. The mana disturbance settled down like morning dew and strong gust blew. It struck at their light body.

Soon, a mazoku standing over two meters tall appeared in their sight. A red skinned giant. Its thick arms and legs seem to announce all his body knew was strength.

“Humans... Did you already bring an army.”

“I, it’s big....”

Everyone held their breaths at the incredible aura that came out of the gigantic body. Someone spoke with fear-filled voice.

“Reiji-sama! Be careful!”

“I know. But, Tia...”

Reiji squinted his eyes at Titania’s warning.

He felt that mazoku was abnormal when it was flying over, but on closer inspection, it was covered in wounds. From the wounds all over its body, dark aura evaporated like steam. Its movement had no life to it. It was clear that it was weakened.

If a comparison could be made, it was like a leftover after a meal. As if it had just fought a fierce battle, no, it probably did just fight in one. This mazoku had definitely fought in this place.

It was weakened. But taking its mana and combined physical might into calculations, it was still a strong opponent for them.

Hadorius asked to the gigantic mazoku.

“You don’t seem to be a mere mazoku.”

“That’s right.... My name is Rajas. I am a Demon Chief who commands an army....”

When Demon Chief Rajas introduced itself, Titania and Graziella shouted.

“Demon Chief....?!”

“Ho-oh.... It seems your size isn’t the only thing you have.”

Amidst the waves of murmur, Hadorius carefully watched Rajas and questioned while being on guard.

“You seem to have gone through quite a fight. Who did you fight here?”

“Shut up. That’s not something the likes of you need to know....”

Rajas ignored Hadorius as if it was something unpleasant. The voice was also filled with pain from the wound, and resentment from the loss as well.

While they were talking, Rajas took a fighting stance. Was he planning to attack first.

Everyone raised their weapons having seen Rajas move. But feeling he could

not miss this chance, Reiji asked Rajas.

“.... I have something to ask.”

“What is it?”

“Why do you attack humans?”

That was right. The reason why mazokus attack humans. Reiji wanted to know all along.

Rajas spat out the words as he scowled in discontent.

“It’s obvious. The order you have created is annoying. That is why humans must die.”

“Order humans have created? For something like that to annoy you... can’t other races residing in other places live as they wished?”

“No. Humans fester everywhere like maggots. There is nothing more angering than when they claim it’s order and prod around everywhere. So they must be wiped out.”

“Humans and mazokus are both living beings. What meaning is there to kill each other over such reason?”

“Reason?”

“Yes.”

This was the battle of words before a fight. He was not simply trying to say some flashy words. Being able to understand each other or being friends just by talking was a simple delusion made up by fools. There were those who could never accept the others.

Reiji understood well enough. But a fight without proper justification should not be fought. It did not mean to hold each other's hands. It simply meant not interfering with each other.

Titania sent a worried gaze and Graziella simply snorted. He didn't care what others thought, but wanted to hear the answer for this.

Then Rajas spoke with a suspecting look.

“..... So, are you are a hero?”

“If I am?”

“Ku.... kuku, is that so.... Speaking so arrogantly without fear.... But this is good. Now I can accomplish my objective.”

Rajas spoke delightfully despite not being able to hide that he was spent.

Graziella exploded in laughter when she saw Rajas.

“What, mazoku, are you sure your wounds don’t hurt anymore?”

“Is that something you should care about? I can’t go back like this. To make up for this failure, I will take your head, hero! I won’t show my back to the humans anymore!”

Following a mysterious pain filled shout, Rajas’ physical and magical power became stronger.

Reiji raised his sword. When Hadorius followed and raised his sword, the soldiers prepared as well. Mizuki retreated to the rear and Titania readied her magic from behind him. Felmenia stood her ground.

Meanwhile, whether Graziella decided to watch silently, she simply stood in place with her arms crossed. She seemed to be familiar with battles as her arrogant aura remained in place.

“Hey you, a question.”

“The time to play along with your questions is over, hero!!”

Rajas moved. Its gigantic two meter body flew at incredible speed towards Reiji.

It was a truly fearsome speed.

“Kuuuh----”

Reiji jumped as if responding. With incredible jumping ability he could not even imagine before coming to this world, he flew over Rajas and swung down the sword with all his might.

“Hyaaaaa!”

The sword struck Rajas’ fist along with the shout. Reiji did not loosen his grip on the sword despite feeling the shock of striking the fist. For a one handed attack to match the two handed attack with the summoned blessing. If this was how strong he was when spent, just how strong would he be on full strength. While midair, Rajas’ other arm came from the side. Understanding he was at a disadvantage, Reiji relaxed his grip on the sword and landed. The gigantic arm now changed its course to aim for Reiji’s head.

He didn’t watch for the movement. There was no time. What made him feel it was the extraordinary senses. Reiji landed with one hand in prone position and rolled. The hand that landed on the ground splattered mud and he blocked the mud with the sword to be careful they did not get into his eyes. And the moment he was about to swing his sword, Rajas smashed the ground with incredible force.

“Uwaggh!”

The ground shook. Reiji lost his balance just like that. At the same time, a gigantic body rushed in.

He realized it was too late to dodge. So rather than to waste effort, he braced for the impact with the sword pointed out. He flew back. The pain accompanied the landing. If not for his summoning’s blessing, his body would have been

shattered. The rapid attack that did not even allow for a moment of respite helped raise the flag of victory in favour of Rajas. Soon, as if the frozen time started to move again, Mizuki's screams could be heard.

“R, Reiji!!”

“... Don't worry Mizuki. I'm fine.”

Pulsating pain burrowed through his body, but when he overcame and stood up, Rajas shouted with rage filled voice for some reason.

“Is this the power of a hero?! Something like that is the power to threaten the grand plans of us mazokus! To try to take us down with this kind of strength, there's a limit to your arrogance!”

What was the nature of disappointment in his anger. He could almost mistake it as being compared to something.

Hadorius stood before Rajas who was about to attack again.

“Don't interfere!”

Despite the deafening sound, Hadorius simply stood off without a word. Hadorius easily made a fool of Rajas by dodging the fists that flew in like cannon shots. He was strong and fast enough to make people wonder if he was really middle-aged. He found a gap and accurately lunged at the large wound on Rajas' chest with his sword.

“Ku, uggh!”

“Hmph....”

Hadorius did not seem too pleased even though Rajas frowned in pain from being stabbed in the wound. He simply snorted as if it was easy and looked at Rajas with contempt. To face off against such a strong mazoku, he was truly a man of incredible skill.

“Kuuu! How dare a mere human-----”

Rajas swung his arms wildly as if chasing away an annoying fly. But Hadorius simply jumped back to a safe distance.

“Get out of the way----”

What rang out was a cold woman’s voice. That was right. The one who moved beyond all expectation was Graziella. Did she remain silent until now to look for an opportunity. She casted a spell as she leaped off the ground.

“---- Earth! You are the crystal of my fierceness! Smash with your force of fury! And become the tombstone judging the will to live! Crystal Raid!”

She completed the chant and the spell right in front of Rajas. Then Graziella struck the ground beneath with a force. Momentarily, the ground began to shake slightly then a boulder sprouted through the crack in the ground. A gigantic boulder came sprouting up like a quartz or a selenite. Upon Graziella’s hand motion, it rushed towards Rajas.

A sturdy magic that turned the edge of the rock into a sword. It pounced at Rajas--- just moments before, dark aura surrounded Rajas' body.

... The demon chief was buried in a mountain of rock. But the rocks shattered and Rajas stood unchanged from before.

“Ho-oh, no effect.”

Was that aura just now Rajas' defense skill. There was no of new wound on that gigantic body. The magic that struck Rajas was ranked above intermediate. Its constitution was extraordinary to withstand such powerful attack.

But Graziella only looked slightly surprised that it did not work and there was no sign of being worried.

That was when it struck.

“Uwoooooohh!”

Rajas let out a roaring shout. It was a life snapping roar that seemed to draw strength by force from deep within self.

The dark energy that gathered around Rajas' right hand expanded to cover everything nearby and exploded. The aftershock was closer to a wave mixed with dark energy.

It's dangerous.....!

When he re-checked the distance between him and Rajas, bitter saliva pooled in his mouth. Ten meters was too short of a distance to run. Its strength was not something that one could escape unscathed if hit. There were still paralyzing effect on the body. He still could not move. There was not enough time to use defense magic either.

Amidst blood chilling cold sensation, someone grabbed the arm that was paralyzed in anxiety.

“Reiji-sama! Watch out!”

“Hm? Tia....?”

When he blinked after hearing a voice coming from beside him, the scenery from just before was completely different than the scenery now. The warning that stimulated his brain was from Titania. Looking closely, he was hugging her while hanging from her.

He made sense of the situation in the brain. Did she snatch him, who couldn't move, from the area of the effect of the attack.

When he checked, he was pretty far from Rajas. Did she use magic. It was a split second save.

“Damn it..... Even if I use all my strength, that's all. Just how strong is that lightning.”

Rajas gasped for air. With hoarse voice, he continued to curse. It seemed more chagrined than in pain. Its physical pain had been pushed out of mind by

rage.

Soon, wave of mana from the surrounding could be felt. The power of magic expanded and the mages cast their spell all at once.

Various kinds of spells surrounded Rajas. Those magics were combinations of undeniable attributes like fire or thunder. Furthermore, because many powerful mages casted it at once, the magic was even more powerful than Graziella's spell.

Still Rajas remained unharmed. The magic had no effect.

After checking it with her own eyes, Titania spoke in shocked tone.

".... Just how strong is it."

"Kuh, ugggh....."

How strong was it indeed. In the end, only one who hurt it was Hadorius.

But Rajas still groaned. It had a mortal damage to start with. It was certain that its death was close.

"Don't be discouraged! Keep pouring on the magic!"

The soldiers' shout rang out with Hadorius' command.

“Everyone....”

----- While everyone in Reiji’s companion was off fighting, Mizuki was the only one clenching her teeth in the rear.

Before the mazoku that was strong enough to smash ground, Reiji, Titania, the noble who put Suimei into a trap, and even the Empire’s princess who appeared out of nowhere was fighting. But only she was watching the situation while being protected by a knight who had accompanied her. The fact she had to tightly hold onto the back of the knight was so painful to her.

Even though her friends were in danger, the fact she couldn’t move in fear weighed down on her heart.

Before, when she was in danger, both Reiji and Suimei helped her. It was back when they were in the other world, but it only made herself more intolerable.

---- Why am I not doing anything.

When she knew Suimei was in danger, she was shaking, unable to move in fear. And now when Reiji and Titania were fighting desperately, she was shaking behind Luca. She was just waiting for all of it to pass by.

Was she going to stay like this. Even though she followed because she wanted to be a strength to someone precious to her, will she do nothing and continued to be protected. When that person is fighting a difficult battle against that gigantic mazoku, will she do nothing. Only those kinds of thoughts came to her.

No.... I can’t.... That’s....

No. It couldn't. That would be denying her words and avoiding responsibility. It would be nothing but giving up being beside Reiji.

The girl who followed him along with her, Astel's princess, Titania was fighting not only for Reiji but for countless others she knew nothing of.

Is there.... Is there nothing I can do....?

So she needed to do something that she could do. If she did nothing now, then she would continue to do nothing in the future. She would become an existence to be protected and someone who is not needed by anyone. The question towards self was a good start. Now she thought about what she could do with all her might.

That was right. What could she do.

For her--- for her, there was only magic. Only thing she learned on her own after coming to this world was magic. So only thing she could help with in battle was magic. But it couldn't be an ordinary magic. Only a magic surpassing Graziella's spell could defeat that giant mazoku.

The magic I can use is....

---- The icy hell that will announce the death of all breath of fire.....

"Ah...."

Clear image and words that suddenly popped into her mind. An unknown voice rang inside the head and intuition confirmed her. This magic would work.

But she thought, why now. Or was it because it is now.

Even Titania and Felmenia said that magic was something that suddenly comes up in the head. She heard it was the case as well when Reiji first used his magic. This was definitely that.

But she couldn't use it like this. Now she only needed the courage to stand at that place. She needed to squeeze that courage.

When she thought that, she had already dismounted from the horse.

“M, Mizuki-sama?! You can't!”

“Mizuki?!”

When Luca and Reiji saw her walk towards danger, they tried to stop her. But she couldn't stop: not for herself, not for being beside Reiji, and not for her friends including Reiji. Then she stood. In the middle of the battlefield. She could see Rajas' back. It did not notice her because it was too busy standing off against the soldiers. If she poured on the magic at the undefended rear-----.

“What is it.... Little girl.”

“Hoo, ah....”

Before she could cast magic, Rajas turned around. Just meeting its gaze was enough to make freeze her body with mysterious chilling sensation. She could not move a finger. Was everyone fighting against something like this. How could they fight against something like this as if it was nothing. In front of such a being, any form of attack looked pitiful.

“What are you doing! Mizuki, get back!”

“Hmph, for some common girl to challenge me without fear---”

Titania’s and Rajas’ voice mixed around and rampaged in her head. She couldn’t understand what was being said. What she could see was a gigantic arm. Even if it just scratched her, she would be smashed. The thought of her being smashed to pieces by a log-like arm became bigger. She couldn’t move.

..... It was impossible. It was foolish to think all she needed was heart---- the courage to act.

“Annoying.”

What came was cold and harsh word. Something she did not want to hear. It was arrogant and cold word that thought her no different than a bug.

“S, stop.....”

What she barely squeezed out was a tiny voice comparable to a bug’s breath. It couldn’t hear it. It wouldn’t listen even if it did hear. At this rate----.

“-----K, kuaaaaaaaaahh!”

When Mizuki was suppressed with its fierceness, Rajas suddenly let out a cry. The way it clutched the chest while roaring, that part---- no, something deeper was the cause. It was as if something was running wild within the body.

Then a blue lightning sprouted out from Rajas’ wounds and joints like a snake.

“Ugh, ah, gyaaaah! You still badger me even now!”

Was that for the lightning or for some other being. While the anger for what or who continued, the blue lightning kept gnawing at Rajas like a viper. Ringing sound of thunder. Sharp sound of sparks resonating by ear. Amidst all that, a faint and helpless cry. Rajas could not defend.

So Reiji moved again.

He could not miss this chance. As if determined to take it down before it could move again. Did his body recover? Reiji came out of Titania’s arms and quickly burrowed into Rajas. There was a thin rope of flame surrounding him, so she knew he used a strengthening magic. Rajas swung his arm to block it, but the arm bound by lightning was slow. The orichalcum sword swung in with a gale. At the same time, Rajas’ arm was still mid air.

“HYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

Reiji’s shout shook the air. And the orichalcum sword found its mark in Rajas’ chest.

“Ku.... ah.... How stupid. Something like this.....”

Perhaps Rajas was surprised because it had been underestimating Reiji's strike. It felt like a small needle that no one cared about piercing through the heart.

Meanwhile, Reiji remained silent after having stabbed Rajas in the chest.

Was he not letting go. As if he came into contact with the lightning after digging the blade into Rajas, Reiji left the sword in and back pedalled.

“Kuh, ugh..... If not for that man, I wouldn't lose to something like you.”

“Is that man the one who is responsible for this scenery?”

“That's right! That man wearing black who used magic I've seen for the first time and destroyed my army--- if not for that man! I would never lose to the likes of you!”

Rajas squeezed out his last strength to shout. For not being able to fight further due to the thunder and Reiji's sword, acting as if he would at least leave a curse. Suddenly, Felmenia strided forward to Rajas.

“What.... You....”

Rajas groaned while asking the beautiful mage in white robe walking at surprisingly leisurely pace. Then Felmenia spoke in relaxed tone as though to

reply to Rajas.

“Mazoku, I have one thing to ask you.”

“Ask me?”

“About the man wearing black you just mentioned.”

“What....?”

On Rajas’ face with sweat rolling down, sign of curiosity flashed for a bit.

As if being hesitant of the question, Felmenia closed her eyes for a moment before asking.

“Mazoku. That man wearing black. Did he call himself a magician?”

“---- You bitch!! You know about him?! You accursed little girl!!”

Rajas’ reaction after hearing Felmenia was abnormal. It was a beastly roar that did not care about how the enemy knew the man responsible.

Soon only breathing noise could be heard as if even cursing was too painful.

On the other hand, Felmenia’s amber eyes shined in admiration while murmuring.

“.... That’s how it was. It’s really him.”

“Answer.... How..... How do you.....”

“You said he was a magician. Then I have nothing more to say.”

“If, if not for that man.... Losing to something like you is.....”

Did he mean to say impossible? That was probably correct. Rajas was a strong opponent. If it was not already battered from a battle before and if not for that blue lightning, they would not have won. They would have collapsed under his superior physical might and attacks.

Soon blue lightning flowed out from inside the body and Rajas’ body glowed in a blue light. Even amidst of it, Rajas kept screaming out a name, but it was inaudible before the absolute might of the sound of dragon like thunder and lightning. Rajas’ body disappeared along with the powerful thunder noise, as if it could not hold against its power anymore.

The orichalcum sword that pierced Rajas fell on the ground with a clang as if announcing the end of the battle.



“Mizuki!”

As Rajas was burnt to nothing by thunder, Titania called Mizuki’s name while rushing over to her.

Dumbfounded, Mizuki lost her strength and stayed unmoving. Unmoving.

With just that, Rajas' murderous intent and strength faded. Slowly lowering her trembling hand, Mizuki was visibly terrified.

Reiji also moved towards her, and bafflingly asked about the sudden situation.

“Mizuki! What a ridiculous thing to have done...”

“Sorry. I've, I've always been just watching from the sidelines. That's why, I had to do something at any cost so...”

With a pale white face, Mizuki faced Reiji and said such a reckless reason. Then, looking at her own shaking hands, she silently fell into her own thoughts.

Titania squatted down as if to look at Mizuki in the eyes.

“Nevertheless. If you had messed up at any step, that mazoku Rajas would have killed you.”

“A spell came into my mind... so I thought with that I'd be able to deal with him. That's why...”

She gave such a reason. And then, once more, she apologized to the two of them. In response, Reiji let out words of relief and embraced her.

“Thank god you're safe...”

“...Yeah.”

After a little, Hadorius finished reorganizing the troops and sent out scouts to the surroundings while Titania inquired of Felmenia.

“White flame-dono. There is something I would like to ask of you. Is that fine?”

To Titania’s polite words, Felmenia replied in affirmation. If there was anyone who would have anticipated something like what had happened, it would be her, and so Felmenia swallowed and listened to Titania’s question.

“White flame-dono. You asked about it earlier but, you chased this mazoku, so do you know the person that created this situation?”

Felmenia nodded in assent silently, acknowledging the guess of the people here.

“Say it, that man, what kind of person is he? Name?”

There, Graziella suddenly came over and spoke. Was she interested? No, there was no way she wasn’t. The hot headed girl butt into the conversation with a demanding tone but, Felmenia displayed a sullen expression that implied she could not answer.

“I am sorry. I cannot answer that question.”

“...What did you say?”

“This is a state secret. I cannot answer to princess Graziella.”

“That mazoku Rajas said the person you know annihilated all of these mazoku troops right? Even a fool would know this is a crucial matter. Knowing that, you say you cannot answer?”

Despite hearing Felmenia’s words, Graziella would not back down. Spitting out those words, she approached while giving off magic power. The atmosphere grew to a boiling point as she demanded an explanation.

However, Felmenia remained obstinate.

“Ha. Regardless of the situation, classified is classified. Even if we’re allied and there is joint sharing of mazoku knowledge, unless it is declassified I have no reason to reply.”

Graziella’s face grew contorted. As if she would raise her hand at any moment, she clicked her tongue. Felmenia had declared it as a state secret. To make them talk about state military matters, Felmenia and Hadorius would not permit it. Causing an incident here to get answers would be a serious matter.

Titania then spoke up instead.

“About that, am I included as well?”

“Unfortunately.”

Titania lowered her head as she spoke. Next, Hadorius also came up.

“Stingray-kyou. To not be able to tell Titania, is it an imperial command from His Majesty the King then?”

“About that, while reluctant, I also cannot speak for.”

“I see...”

From the denial, he understood. However, they were all immensely curious as to what it was, and Reiji gave a dubious frown. A person as strong as that, shouldn't exist in the Astel Kingdom. Maybe he didn't know of it, but for Hadorius and Titania to not know, he couldn't accept it.

While Reiji was thinking, Hadorius looked to the right and then after pondering a bit, made a surprising announcement.

“Then, this mazoku and the troops. There is no problem if we give all credit to the hero.”

“Wha...?!?”

Of course the first person to show a surprised face was Reiji himself. Seeing his confusion, Hadorius curiously threw a question at him.

“What are you so surprised about?”

“Wouldn't anyone be? I didn't do it.”

“That’s true. However, giving the hero party credit will bring all kinds of advantages. Am I wrong?”

“That is...”

To Hadorius’ words, Reiji paused in his rejection. At that time, there was one more person who voiced her objection. Graziella.

“You, do you think I will allow that? We were also here and fought.”

Graziella knew the truth. In a loud voice, she protested giving the achievement to Reiji.

Thereupon, Hadorius politely replied, as if he had already prepared a response beforehand.

“Princess Graziella. If you let this by, then we promise to not protest your attack.”

“My attack, you said?”

“Am I wrong? After all, you brought your troops here.”

“You, you dare...”

“Wouldn’t you also be troubled by bad rumors? For us to overlook this, are

we not doing you a favor?”

“...Do as you like.”

As Hadorius reiterated his sugar-coated malicious words, Graziella overlooked the matter. Titania may have also had something on her mind, as she looked at Hadorius with a mixture of surprise and suspicion, but Hadorius ignored her and continued as usual, starting to give commands to his subordinates.

Chapter 2: The goddess is super strict with her

The Imperial capital of Filas Folia. The biggest city in the empire, it had a gigantic crystal bust statue of the goddess in its cathedral and boasted the largest library of all three countries in the imperial private university. And then Astel and the Sadius union jointly built a magician's training and research institution. It was a city whose size was the second largest, if not largest in the world.

The outskirts were built out of wood and ashen colored bricks while the streets and districts were constructed using warm red-tinged bricks, and the noble's living quarters with even finer brilliant burgundy bricks.

The reason why there was so much red was because the emperor five generations ago liked red.

A sign of individualistic interests, in the other world red was a color common in Europe, and the lore was that it came from the spilled blood of saints of long ago. In addition, it was reminiscent of the color of knight and military overcoats during battle. In another world, for it to be same in the militaristic empire was an interesting coincidence.

While thinking about that, Suimei looked up. In the sprawling capital, there were many tall buildings. Because the walls were tall, the buildings here were taller than those of other countries.

Even for Suimei, the Astel capital of Metel was quite different compared to

here. Metel had a lot of people as well, but the imperial capital gave off a much more modern feeling. While it did have many small shops and parks, because the maintenance of its wards and sewage systems was immaculate, the imperial capital seemed more developed.

However, despite seeing those beautiful streets and children frolicking in the water, Suimei's gloomy mood didn't lift at all. His worn out breathing and grumbling self, but there was a reason for that.

"I can't believe that Reiji and the others cleaned up after us."

He had repeated this to himself countless times already.

According to the travelers he had talked to, Reiji had returned to Astel territory from the Empire with the military. Then, they had defeated Rajas and his subordinates.

Of course, to Suimei this would be extremely unexpected, and upon knowing, his mind was swept up in annoyance.

Seeing his moody countenance, Lefille asked in consideration.

"Suimei-kun. You still can't stop thinking about what that traveler said? Whether he actually defeated Rajas, we don't technically know."

"True. But, I didn't see where he actually died. And both Reiji and Rajas' names appear in the rumors. Most likely, I didn't actually defeat him with that last hit."

Sighing, the reason for his anguish was that. While he was depressed for having caused problems for Reiji and his group, it was more of that his pride as a magician had been torn because of his inability to decisively settle the matter. His holy magic. While he had been exhausted, that he had been unable to end him left a bitter taste in his mouth even though residual holy magic indicated that it was merely a problem of time.

“A complete disappointment. Despite my big talk I couldn’t kill him with that one blow.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Being unable to defeat him decisively, didn’t you do enough? Most likely your friends came across the weakened Rajas. Just think about what would have happened if you hadn’t fought Rajas and they had encountered him...”

As she said, most likely they would no longer be alive. However,

“Yeah I guess. At least we don’t have that problem... Haaa”

“Being unable to defeat him is a fact though, is that what you want to say? I understand how you feel but, constantly sighing is bad for you. If you give off that gloomy atmosphere, everyone around is going to avoid us you know.”

“Ah, I guess you’re right.”

Suimei acknowledged Lefille’s rebuke.

“People will avoid us if you keep sighing,” she just said. In other words, you’re making everyone depressed. Happiness is something that people have. If people don’t approach, then you’ll never cheer up, is what she said to distract him.

It was as she said. Even if he kept grumbling forever, that wouldn’t change.

“Yosh, I’ll stop. Stop. Let’s turn around these feelings.”

“Yes. That’s good.”

Saying that, Lefille gave a quiet smile while raising her fist. Staying cheerful at a time like this, as expected of her.

“So, you said you had somewhere you wanted to go, Lefille. Where to?”

“Yes. The Salvation Church.”

“Seriously?”



Hearing Lefille’s request, they finally arrived at an area close to the gate of the outer wall. They were at one of many Salvation Churches in the empire.

It was the first time they had been to a church of a great religion in the other world, but it gave off a completely different impression compared to other

places. As they walked along, the path gradually changed from completely brick to stone, and there was a carefully maintained flower bed along with a pond. The narrow path was surrounded by dense trees; it was as if the path was carved out sparingly, barely allowing enough space. And if one listened closely, you could hear the chirps of small birds. It was like a sacred preservation ground. Ahead, there was a building.

In there, was an inviting small path. As they approached, Suimei's face darkened into a serious expression as he realized something.

“Church...church huh...”

“You've had a worried look for a while. Is something wrong?”

“No, there isn't really anything. It's just I can't get used to the atmosphere. Of this place that is.”

“Can't get used to? At this peaceful place?”

“Ahh, well yeah there is a positive vibe, and mana seems to be abundant.”

“Ye-yeah... No matter how I look at it there doesn't seem to be a negative aura, so then why?”

“It might just be how us magicians are. We just don't get along with churches and here we are at their stronghold.”

In the other world, there were many natural enemies of magicians. Of them,

churches were one of the worst. The popular religion of a church. In the other world, there was one, and if he brought up the monotheism, it would be easy to understand the relationship between churches and magicians. In that religion, the Savior, which was the manifestation of god, would try to raise his teachings to supremacy and grant miracles to the people who believed in him. These miracles were simply magic to the magician. But to the religion, when others used magic, they would be branded as radical sects outside of the power that the god gave.

And so they who relied on magic was thought of as the enemy of humanity.

Because of that, there was a set of correct law in religion — in other words, since their work was not recognized as miracles, magicians relied on ways that were said to bring about unhappiness. In summary, the church moved to eradicate users of magic outside of their religion.

It was a dreadful sense of duty, or it should have been.

That was their excuse to start an ill-reputed witch hunt, and Helen Duncan (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Duncan) was one of the last to be convicted due to the famous Witchcraft Act. The power of their beliefs was not to be made light of. Of course, the same could be said for other religions, and if you thought about it, it couldn't be said that what they did was excessive for religion. Any religion had many miracles, and there were always those who did not acknowledge them.

Moreover, there were many magic users with ill intent, and fraudulent usage of spiritual information was rampant, so it wasn't just a matter of baseless blind belief.

However, it was a fact that magic was taken to be equivalent to heresy.

The Inquisitors. They were agents that wouldn't be present in a normal religion.

That's why he had to be vigilant, Suimei was trained to never overlook anything, so his tension was understandable.

"A circumstance of your world?"

"Yeah."

"It wasn't about people seeing the two of us together huh..."

"No, it didn't have that meaning. My bad my bad."

Suimei shyly scratched his cheek as he apologized to Lefille.

Inflating his cheeks, he idly looked down at the ground. Seeing the conflict in her face, he couldn't help but to apologize.

"...Well, that aside, is here fine?"

"'Is here fine', meaning?"

"Aren't there much larger churches in the Empire? Like, the places where all the sightseers from other countries gather at?"

Lefille grumbled in a quiet voice. It was as if she was certain there would be problems if they went to those places.

“Why?”

“Ah, well at those places there’s bound to be respectable high ranking priests. Pretty much, strong people gifted by the goddess. It’s true that people of strength gather there, which you know even more so than I do, but... if they see through me to my true form, what would we do?”

“Uh huh...? Even in this world if they figure out you’re a spirit, I don’t think it’ll be that much of a problem. Am I wrong?”

About that question, there was the talk of this world from Lefille earlier. In this world, spirits should be a familiar matter, and previously, Lefille had felt the presence of spirits. If that’s the case, it shouldn’t be much of a worry, but how was it really?

Upon Suimei saying so, Lefille knit her eyebrows.

“However it seemed when I called the red storm spirit during fighting, Ishaktoni is an existence divided from my blood. Ishaktoni is, regarding the Alsharia spirit myth, an existence that fought the evil god Zekaraia as goddess Arshuna’s right arm. A direct subordinate of Arshuna. In other words...”

“If people knew that they will be very thankful. For sure.”

“Yes. When I was in Noshias it was all fine. Even if I was half spirit, everyone understood me. However, in another place, if people find out, it would probably become an outrageous situation.”

Imagining the danger that would arise in that situation, Lefille trembled and her face turned blue. It wasn't hard to imagine that something like a cult would form and she would be worshipped as a living god. Rather, from Lefille's troubled reaction right now, it was easy to see the outcome.

“Hahaha, isn't that fine?”

“It's not a laughing matter! Every day every day, being begged to, being cried to in thanks, and being followed to the ends of the world with all kinds of ridiculous questions. More than just being unable to bear it, I'd get depressed!”

“Yeah. That's, well, it would be too unfortunate... heh heh heh.”

After hearing Lefille's inner anger, Suimei could only let out a strange laugh, until they heard the squeak of the church door opening.

They quickly looked over in that direction to see a man coming out.

It was a man who had swept back black and grey hair. He was of slim physique and looked unhealthy. There wasn't anything particular out of place, yet he gave off an abnormal air. They didn't know what to make of him, but he didn't seem like a churchman. His eyes were closed and his face was rigid as he walked with a firm pace. He wore ceremonial looking clothes, and a light breeze was felt as he passed by.

Because the path was so narrow, Suimei and Lefille had to make way for him to pass, and he nodded briefly as he walked by.

After a brief while, Lefille turned and squinted down the path that he went. From her came a sharp gaze unlike that of her young appearance as she stared at the man's back.

“Suimei-kun. That man.”

“What about him?”

“Well, I think he's considerably skilled.”

Considerably skilled. He didn't have excessive magic power, nor emit any mysterious feeling. Based on that...

“Meaning... a swordsman?”

“Yes... what about it? Are you also knowledgeable about swords?”

“Well, I do use a sword but, I still have yet to understand the specific details of swordsmanship. After all, strong people have a lot of cards they don't show on the outside. Being able to read those... I'm still far from it.

“Hmm... I see.”

However, that means it's that way for most people right? Leaving aside the

matter about spirits, Lefille is the one that normally comments on people about matters other than their physical strength, meaning that he is unfamiliar with those kinds of things.

With that said, then at the station previously...

“The Lilia from before, you had a pretty good idea about her.”

The magic user, Lilia Zandike. The magic power she exuded was unignorable. From what he could tell, she had a considerable amount of magic despite not even using a magic furnace.

“Lilia Zandike huh. There isn't much information but, it seems she fought in several skirmishes with the country to the south, and has a few notable achievements. Her nickname from those are, the Empire's Human Weapon.”

“What a dangerous name.”

“She handled her missions easily and emotionlessly, but that might just be because she's normally expressionless.”

It was as Lefille said, she did seem to be pretty expressionless. Having only exchanged two or three words with her, he didn't really know how she was in actuality.

“... saying that, this isn't the place to be talking about such things. If we don't hurry and pray...”

Lefille suddenly said so. As if she had predicted it, they heard a sound and then the pure white gate opened. Just as they entered, she walked up to the goddess statue.

Devoutness... no, in this world the goddess Arshuna's existence was a given, so it was a little different. Suimei also entered and looked up to the ceiling.

A salvation church. It was a little different than the other world, having no stained glass or pipe organs. Although, it exuded a tranquil atmosphere and the goddess statue had considerable decorations.

Near the ceiling were windows from which light shone radiantly onto the floor. The parts of the floor not illuminated by natural light had a warm glow from the magically powered lights. In the church there were few people: poorer looking children, calm elderly women, well-groomed middle aged men; all of them were kneeling in prayer in front of the goddess statue.

It was a respectable church.

“Good afternoon.”

While Suimei was evaluating the church, a woman came from the side and spoke. Turning to face her, Suimei returned her greeting.

“Ah... good afternoon... huh!?!”

After saying “ah” and greeting her, Suimei couldn't contain his surprise. With a dubious shout, Suimei's eyes widened. Seeing his reaction, the sister tilted her head in curiosity.

“What would be the matter?”

“Your ears!”

Suimei couldn't do anything but exclaim about her appearance.

“Isn't that only natural? You would also have ears correct?”

“It's not that, I mean, that, that”

“...Ahhh, could it be that this is the first time you have seen a beastman?”

“Ah...”

Beastman. The Empire had a wide variety of races. She would be what is known as a beastman. Born with ears, beastmen also had the trait of being stronger than humans.

Having finally convinced himself of that, he thought that animal ears wouldn't be strange then. She was dressed like a nun, having many fluttering blue clothes. Under her veil, she had wavy pink hair. Two cat ears were poking out from her head.

Looking at her face, she had a gentle expression and a face full of wisdom.

Suimei then apologized to the sister for the commotion he had caused.

“I was surprised because your ears were real... I am deeply sorry for my brief outburst.”

“I see. In that case your surprise was inevitable since you had never seen a beastman before.”

The sister let out a soft chuckle. Saying that to the older sister, she seemed somewhat embarrassed.

Putting her finger on her cheek, she tilted her head and asked.

“Are you not here to pray?”

“Well, I’m here with her.”

Seeing Lefille kneeled in prayer, the sister made a happy face.

“Ah, what a little girlfriend you have there.”

“Hah?” So suddenly what did...”

“But that’s no good. For a man of your age to be with such a small girl, I don’t recommend it in the Empire.”

“It-it isn’t like that. That’s not what I meant by that!”

“Fufufu, I’m joking. I understand that.”

The sister implied that she had tricked Suimei as she laughed at him with a pleasant smile. It was a perfect scene.

Thereupon, she turned around to talk to Lefille.

“Isn’t she an enthusiastic kid.”

“...Yeah. As soon as we got to the capital, I asked her where she wanted to go and she immediately replied the church, which is why we’re here now. When she was able to pray, if I didn’t take her to a church then she’d pull on my clothes until we went.”

“The goddess’ teachings are important huh. She’s quite level headed for her age.”

“Heh hehhh...please don’t talk about age in front her.”

“...?”

Hearing that, the sister’s ears perked up as she looked with a wondering gaze.

It would be a pity for Lefille if she couldn’t return back to normal soon.

Behind Suimei’s head there was a crackling noise, and a row had formed next to Lefille. The priest’s sermon had ended, and everyone had to stand up straight

in anticipation for something.

Suimei tried to ask the sister.

“What’s the line for after the sermon ends?”

“The goddess Arshuna’s oracle. After the prayer is over, the priest gives the goddess’ divine revelation. Though usually there is none.”

“I see.”

Was the oracle why Lefille had been doing those things during their journey? The priest stood next to the bust statue and murmured. And then looking close, it seemed to be that way. He couldn’t sense the movement of magic yet, just at that location, divine power moved, and the mana density increased.

Most likely the priest was using his body as a medium to receive the goddess’ oracle. It was the real deal.

As Suimei raised his voice in wonder, the sister spoke in a dubious tone.

“For you to not know that is strange. Any religion should have it...”

“Where I’m from there is no Salvation Church.”

“That’s unusual. Then again, the village I’m from also doesn’t have the belief of the goddess so it’s a little nostalgic.”

At the unexpected coincidence, the sister put on a smile. Her animal ears reflecting her mood, it was quite a heartwarming scene.

“That reminds me...”

“What is it?”

“Could it be that you arrived at Filas Filia today?”

“You know?”

“Well, among other reasons, this is the first time you’ve seen a beastman so...”

“Ahh... I guess I leaked that in my carelessness.”

By using information from his surroundings as well as asking about a few ordinary but related things, she had seen through him as if he were a country bumpkin. As Suimei briefly lamented about his own ignorance, the sister panicked about her own impoliteness.

“Ahh, that’s not really it...”

As she said so, Suimei put on a refreshing smile.

“...Anyway, wouldn’t you tell this careless me if there’s anything I should

know?”

“Ha... okay, I agree. Though there isn't that much...”

“Is there something?”

“There's two, no three things. Do you want to hear the bad or good parts first?”

“Then the bad parts first. Hearing the good parts after will somewhat soften the first part.”

The sister replied in affirmation after hearing that. Changing to a serious face, she leaned in to tell him advice.

“You said that you had just come to the imperial capital but, be careful about leaving during the night. There have been some bad incidents around this area in the capital.”

“Incidents, you said?”

“Yes. Recently there have been many cases of people being found in a coma-like conditions, so a lot of people are feeling unsafe.”

“That sounds quite dangerous. Is it something like attacks by ruffians?”

“Well, it has the marks of being instigated by magic, so it doesn't seem to be

your typical crime.”

“It sounds like it’s been going on for a while, has it still not been resolved?”

“The military police have been trying, but still not yet. The criminals leave few clues, and the magic is extremely effective so it’s hard to determine the attribute. It doesn’t seem likely that the criminal will be caught.”

The sister cast her eyes down in sadness. Like her appearance, she seemed like a kind sympathetic person who thought of the impacts it had on the victims and the people around them.

Even so,

“Sister, it seems you know quite a bit.”

“Yes, many different types of people come and go at the church, so I hear a lot.”

Upon saying that, her ears twitched as if showing her confidence in gleaning information from hearsay. Suimei had an urge to touch them, but he persevered.

Then, the sister clapped her hands as she changed to the good news.

“However, the hero summoned by the El Meide Theocracy has joined in on the investigation, so it should be resolved soon.”

“The hero?”

“Yes. The summoned hero is currently staying in Filas Folia.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. The masses still don’t know, but soon the government and Salvation Church will introduce him. Isn’t it great?”

Was it a good thing? Here, it would get everyone’s attention. The El Meide Theocracy was a neutral country to the south of the empire. There was no way Suimei wouldn’t be curious about heroes other than Reiji. He wanted to know what kind of person they were and their inclinations.

“Also, the other day I heard the hero summoned by the Sadius Union is also moving.”

“Now that you mention it, there are four summoned heroes right?”

“The hero summoned by the Sadius Union seems to be a beautiful girl. It seems that she is quite resourceful and was able to deal with the country’s first prince, who is known as the sword king, fairly easily.”

The third hero was a girl. If that’s the case then on what basis are heroes selected? That meant that it isn’t limited to men. Still...

“...That girl seems quite strong... I wonder how...”

“Did you say something?”

The sister seemed to have slightly overheard Suimei’s muttering, to which Suimei responded with a “no, nothing.” Most likely he would never be able to find an answer. Thinking about that, the sister clasped her hands in front of her chest and spoke.

“With this we’ll have more to fight with the mazoku and the demon king.”

“That’s good news.”

At that time, Lefille was receiving the oracle in front of the priest when the priest let out a shout.

“What did you say?!? I-is t-that true?!?”

At some point Lefille had gotten close to the priest. The priest looked somewhat troubled as he dealt with the panicked Lefille, but he seemed to get used to her behavior after a while, and he tightened his expression and nodded.

“It can’t be!”

It seemed as if that was bad news, as Lefille let out a shriek. Being informed of the bad news, she then immediately turned to Suimei.

“Su-Suimei-kun! W-w-w-w-w-what do we do?!? There’s a problem!!”

“You’re panicking too much Lefille. What’s wrong?”

“Everything’s wrong! What do I do?!?”

“What do I do... first tell me what happened. Then we’ll talk.”

Despite that, Lefille continued shouting in a frenzy.

“The oracle!!! I got another one!”

“Again... so?”

It definitely wasn’t a normal oracle considering her current reaction. What in the world could the goddess have shown her?



“Here huh...”

“Seems like it.”

A few days after they had arrived at the Empire, Suimei and Lefille were in the backside of the residential district.

The back of the residential district. Buildings here were still packed densely and there were many tall ones. Despite it being the middle of the day, the surroundings were still gloomy. If you paid close attention, you could see hints

of dim green, but the pervasive gloom still dominated the atmosphere.

In the other world this would be the slums. The state of the streets exactly matched that description. In addition, the houses were made of cheap material.

Suimei and Lefille's first job upon arriving at the capital was at these residences. It was because currently, Suimei wanted to acquire goods and information and Lefille's objective was to learn magic at a magic academy. That's why after visiting the church, they began looking for a merchant to trade with, but because the majority of land was controlled by the government, they ended up going to the government office. Then, acquiring a correspondence address to get the details, they made plans to meet with the headsman on this day.

It wasn't that they were overcome with surprise by the dim surroundings, but at this place Suimei and Lefille stopped in their tracks.

Upon being there, suddenly Lefille raised her eyes in uncertainty.

"Suimei-kun. Is it really here?"

"Hmm? Yeah it's fine. There's no doubt about it. This is the place."

"That's not it, I'm talking about the area. The location isn't wrong, but, how do I put it... this atmosphere."

The more Lefille looked around, the more uneasy she got. As her gaze implied, this place didn't leave a good impression. Little light penetrated into this area, and a stink wafted about. It was close to the main street but true

enough, from a normal viewpoint it would be hard to call this a nice place.

“Well in the end, this is the only place where we can get what we want. All we can do is bear with it.”

“I see. Well it leaves a bad taste.”

“What, there’s nothing we can do about the light but, the smell can be improved. Although that worry is...”

Suimei stopped midsentence as he came to a realization. Even though he didn’t particularly mind, Lefille depressedly looked down at the dirty bricks everything was made of. Did she care that much about the state of some random residential area? Normally, Lefille was the type of person who would give off a loud laugh as she continued on.

Knowing why she was sad, Suimei suddenly spoke.

“What is it. Are you still worrying about the oracle?”

“O-of course! We gotthatinformation after all.”

The oracle from at the Salvation Church from Arshuna was outside of what they had imagined.

“Stay in the capital and move with the hero to fight the mazoku,” is what she said.

They still hadn't seen the hero from El Meide, and she was told to party up with someone she didn't know. For Lefille who had just arrived at the capital, it was too sudden.

Regardless, it seemed Lefille also was quite resistant to this. After she had calmed down at the church, she still had a melancholic look in her eyes.

But, Suimei also thought this way.

"If you don't want to listen to the goddess, then isn't that fine? It'll be fine if you just pretend you forgot."

"Even if you say that I can't. I've received the goddess' favor, so it would be dishonest to ignore her words."

"Disloyal... so it's about your power huh. It's not something that you yourself wanted, more like something one-sidedly given. Then wouldn't it stand to reason that using that as the premise for why you have to follow her orders the strange part?"

"Th-that may be true but..."

Lefille slowly deflated as she tried to respond. Of course, as a religious person, she was struggling to try and justify her faith. Sometimes, religious people would blame themselves for having wants and desires, pushing themselves into a corner. No, rather, it's more like they feel as if it's an obligation.

People who live clean and upright lives have a strong sense of values. It was a matter of being torn between those and their own desires.

But after all, at this rate...

“Well then, seems like you’re going to act along with the hero from El Meide right?”

“You, for you to say such an insensitive thing! Of course it’s something I don’t want to do!”

“Of course huh... in that case it’s all the more the reason to not go along with it.”

Lefille, who couldn’t decide what to do, drooped her head and shoulders.

“If I make light of the goddess’ words, then if something happened I would...”

She didn’t want to do it. She was in a state where she couldn’t swallow her self-resentment and act.

In that case, it wasn’t actually a case of her being forced to follow the goddess but one of her own sentiments.

“I understand. I’ll do something about it.”

“Eh? What do you mean by that?”

“It’s as I said. If you don’t want to go with the hero then you don’t have to. If

you go then I have to come along. If someone asks about me I'll figure something out. Even if that isn't what you were planning is fine is it not?"

If you can't refuse then it's fine to not do so. It'll be fine if your allies just follow. Even if that wasn't what Lefille had intended, if she had to go then trying to stop her would just damage her own beliefs.

Upon understanding his intention, Lefille cried out.

"Y-you can't! That would be going against the goddess Suimei-kun! If you do that then you'll..."

"You care huh. For me, I don't believe in the goddess. Would heaven, hell, eden, or hades even know? Moreover, us magicians who pursue omnipotence against the laws of the world are despicable existences to the church."

"Even so, if you incite the wrath of the goddess..."

"Isn't that fine? There are plenty of people in the world who oppose the goddess. Yet the world still spins. Thinking that it's impossible to continue living after going against the goddess is just thick."

"Still. If something ever happened..."

Lefille showed an expression mixed with sadness and uneasiness.

Suimei closed his eyes and made a snort as if to say 'what's with the face?'

“Even if something got in my way, I’d just deal with it and continue. Even if it’s god or the devil, it has nothing to do with me. Hmph. If the existences outside of the world try to interfere, let them try. They’re existences that can’t do that anyway. You think I’ll lose to someone who can do nothing but give orders from above?”

“Ah, but he’s omnipotent you know. No matter how powerful you are, there’s going to be situations where you can’t do anything.”

“That doesn’t matter. After all, that’s the level I aspire to be at. If I backed down then I couldn’t call myself a magician.”

He would protect to the very end the people he held dear. That was his reason from his heart. He became a magician to do just that, and so he would put his life on the line to uphold it.

Seeing Suimei’s resolve, Lefille conceded.

“Y... yeah. Thanks...”

“Huh... y-yeah...”

Averting her eyes, Lefille fidgeted as she expressed her gratitude. Suimei looked at Lefille awkwardly as his heart thumped. At that moment.

“...Oh, you’ve arrived!”

The romantic atmosphere was cut short by a voice. Looking in the direction of

the voice, they saw a lively blue haired girl wearing easy to move in clothes. She had large eyes and a cute looking face with tattooed lines running from her cheeks to the back of her neck.

However, she was little. Both in height and chest. All in all she was too little. At first glance she was about the same size as Lefille currently.

(Another little girl. Although I guess Lefille isn't technically a little girl.)

After arriving at the guard station, they had only met little girl after little girl.

While Suimei stared at her with an unpleasant visage while thinking about such complicated matters, the girl turned her head and suspiciously asked.

“What’s with you? You’ve got an unpleasant look for some reason.”

“Heh, sorry. Recently all I’ve been seeing is little children so...”

“Children?!? Are you talking about me?!?”

“...Yeah what about it?”

As soon as Suimei admitted so, the girl’s eyes changed to a dangerous glint, and she talked in an aggressive voice completely unimaginable for a little girl.

“Oi, you. To me you look like my junior, you dare say that to me?”

“Ha? Junior?”

“No matter how I look at it that’s all you are, am I wrong? Aren’t you just a boy that just got out of salvation church school?”

What was this girl saying. As far as he could tell he was older, yet she was angrily saying such things. Could it be that she was a magician who had used magic to reduce her age? Lefille, coming to some kind of realization, tapped her shoulder and spoke.

“Could it be you’re a dwarf?”

“Ah, yes. Both my parents were dwarfs I’m the real deal.”

“You said earlier ‘you arrived,’ so that means...”

“It’s as you think. I’m the one that manages this district, Jilbert Gliga.”

“Uh, aren’t you kind of leaving me behind?”

“Huh?”

Jilbert made face as if to say ‘huh? You wanna go?’ while glaring at Suimei, who felt troubled as he was left out. Her cuteness was all but gone.

“Hah, what’s with you? This kid right here seems quite intelligent, but you, it’s like you’re a lost cause.”

“A lost cause, you...”

What a way of speaking. Suimei had an amazed expression. What in the world could be the reason for why she was speaking that way? When Lefille had come to the realization that she was a dwarf, she was quite considerate towards her but...

“That’s not it. It’s the first time he’s seen a dwarf.”

“Hmm? Is that so. Well, if that’s the case then I guess it can’t be helped if he got the wrong idea.”

“This is a really rude question but, how old are you?”

“Me? 21 this year.”

“Older than me... well damn.”

“That’s right. As soon as you fix your mouth you straighten up huh. You should properly know your manners. There there.”

Jilbert patted his lower back as she replied. Towards Lefille, she patted her shoulders as if to say ‘you’re fine just as you are.’

Dwarfs. According to Norse mythology they were existences of the same classification as sprites and elves living in the underworld. Having the same origin as the beautiful elves of Alfal, in contrast the dwarves had ugly dark appearances of Duergar. They were like a subspecies of the dark elves. They typically were good at smithing and craftsmanship, being able to put out goods rivaling those of the gods. Occasionally they were said to compete and cooperate with the gods as well.

Aside from that, they were known to be typically small, fairly nice, as well as people who loved to play

(Supposedly they have beards and a small body. But I wonder why their appearance and age aren’t really related.)

Even if he thought about it he wouldn’t be able to come up with anything. This was another world, anything could exist.

It seemed like Jilbert liked Lefille, as they had gotten into an intense conversation about clothes. While it seemed like a fun talk, Suimei needed

them to get back on track.

“Sorry for interrupting but, wouldn’t you mind showing us the house now?”

“Hmm? Oh right, I guess there’s that matter. You came to see the house. I forgot.”

“Heh, please don’t forget the reason why we came.”

“Don’t worry. A guy that always worries about minor details isn’t very attractive you know. Being so impatient, are you a virgin?”

“Guu...”

Jilbert put on a teasing smile as she said that. Just as one would expect from a Duelg from the folklore, always spinning their mouths.

After a following Jilbert for a little while, they were shown to a single house between the apartment complexes.

“As you requested, quite a large place.”

“Heee...”

Suimei let out such a sigh as he looked around the entranceway and at the ceiling. The room interior was wood and looked to be old, but the beams and pillars were big and sturdy so it seemed quite firm and stable. As expected of the empire that had invested into the sewage and plumbing systems, he had no complaints about that either.

After going through all of the rooms and returning to the entrance, Jilbert asked in anticipation.

“So how is it?”

“Not bad. You’ve met our requests, and it’s as I could have hoped.”

“Of course. It’s one of my properties. There’s not even a single defect.”

As she said that, Jilbert puffed out her chest.

Lefille quietly looked at the floor and spoke.

“Suimei-kun. You’re always so reliable.”

“Hmm?”

They were words of compliment. Yet she said them unnaturally, as if it were a completely different person. In reality Lefille's heart was turning in turmoil, and as she said her next words they were tinged with a hint of nervousness.

"Tsu, next is my room but,"

"...? Your room?"

"Yeah. You've decided where you're going to be, but I haven't yet."

"Uh, why? It's big enough for the both of us."

"Eh? Th-that, wouldn't it be a hassle?"

She had a surprised look with round eyes as she spoke in a bewildered voice. It couldn't be she was being distant because she was worrying about that thing. It was somewhat cute and it fit her.

"A hassle? Isn't it fine, I intended for it to be like this from the beginning."

"Really?"

Lefille responded in a delighted tone. Then, she leaned in to confirm what Suimei had said.

(Well about that. It would be troubling considering her current form and that she has the curse still.)

(But concerning that, it has nothing to do with you. Besides, you have your own objective right?)

(It's fine. Let's just go. And for my goal, I intend to do it together.)

(...?!)

Suimei just now asked for cooperation. At that moment, Lefille embraced Suimei with a surprised look.

“Thank you! Suimei-kun!”

“Ah, yeah...”

Lefille came up and rubbed her soft cheek against Suimei. Was she overcome by emotion? After all, she was someone who had no-one else. If he thought about it that way, it was understandable. Although it was a bit embarrassing.

It was at that time. They felt a strange gaze from the side.

“Jilbert-san. What's wrong?”

“You, could it be. The rumored pedophile around these areas.”

“No you're wrong I...”

As Suimei tried to explain, Jilbert pushed aside Lefille as she backed away

while sending a disgusted gaze at him.

“Come here. Separate from Lefille. At least 5 steps. And don’t get closer.”

“Listen to what people are saying. I said it was a misunderstanding...”

“That’s what they all say, but underneath you’re a no good person.”

“I said it’s fine... well I have one more request.”

“Mu...aa. Over there. It’s there. Come here.”

As Suimei changed the topic, Jilbert sent a suspicious gaze and then rapidly continued into the room.

“...Suimei-kun. What’s she talking about?”

“Ah. That. The bathroom.”

“A bathroom! Does this place have a bathing place!?”

Hearing Suimei’s answer, Lefille responded with excitement. Jilbert turned and responded to her question.

“Of course. This is the imperial capital. When you’re talking about the capital, you’d be hard pressed to find one without a bath.”

Jilbert boasted in a prideful voice. As soon as she finished talking, Lefille ran up to her. Suimei chased after them and walked into the bathroom. The bathroom was clean and was made of stone and plaster. In it was a newly made wooden bathtub.

Tapping the tub with a knock, Jilbert asked what they thought.

“This would fit your desire right?”

“Waa...”

Catching up, Suimei saw Lefille literally glowing with energy.

In the Astel Kingdom, bathing was uncommon, and recently they had been getting by only wiping themselves down, resulting in a foul stench. For Lefille, who was from Noshias that had common bathing habits, it was quite stressful in Astel. While that was why Lefille wanted to hurry to the empire, Suimei, who came from the other world, also thought that it would be good to get a house with a bathtub.

As someone who knew the importance of bathing, Lefille lost herself in delight.

“Suimei-kun. A bath! A bath! Let’s hurry up!”

There wasn’t a shadow of her normal self. Between the floor and the inside of the bathtub was a gap, but that was just a little detail.

“We still have to clean and do a bunch of chores so let’s leave that for tomorrow.”

“Oh...okay...”

Lefille slumped her shoulders when she heard that she couldn’t bathe today.

During that, Suimei felt another strange gaze from the side and turned to see it was Jilbert.

“...What. What’s with your disgusted look.”

“After all, it’s you. You’re the pedo aren’t you.”

“I don’t think anything that I’ve said would make you think that.”

“Y-y-y-you’re wrong! I would never say something like that! It just sounded wrong!”

“That’s how it is. I’m not entering the bath with Lefille.”

Suimei plainly outlined the situation, yet for some reason upon hearing that, Lefille put on an uneasy expression.

“...Suimei-kun. Could it be that, y-you don’t want to take a bath with me?”

“Ha? Lefille what in the world are you...”

“Dont want to...”

“No, that’s, that’s...”

“Oi why are you so perplexed you filthy pedo... enemy of female dwarfs...”

“I-I-I-I-I said! It’s not like that!”

Suimei hastily bumbled his words, unable to make a sentence. Realizing Jilbert had decided he was a lolicon, he hung his head. Regardless, she seemed set on seeing him in that light.

“Haa....”

Seeing the cold Jilbert, he sighed.

...But because they were able to successfully find a residence, they could begin their magician encampment. This would become the place where they would start the necessary magic research. If one didn’t have a place to do research, then you wouldn’t be able to do anything. It was necessary to create magic items from scratch and set up rooms for magic rites. If they could do that then research would progress swiftly.

“The pedo over there. You’re getting close. Are you listening?”

“Stop messing with me with that loli bullshit! I said already, I’m not a lolicon!”

Ultimately their relationship ended up being one full of arguments.

Hello I’m back :3. The tenses in this part are a little weird, constantly swapping between third and first person (common in Japanese), so I just converted it all to third. It may sound funny at times. Also so knowing myself better, no schedule promises this time (sorry). Finally, I’ve heard that volume 1 and 2 of the light novel actually have some significant differences between the wn, but I’ve decided unless there’s something big that makes me really want to, I’m not going to go back and translate the earlier light novel volumes.

At another place and time, Reiji’s party.

Kurant city. It was in the mountain range to the north blessed with underground springs. A calm and tranquil place, but on the other hand it was also close to the border and sensitive to border threats. Even several hundred years ago it was a hotly contested area. Despite that, because of the highway connecting the Empire and the Union, it was a prosperous place.

Aside from their practice of honoring old traditions, the capital city of Metel was well developed and maintained, and their citizens lived easy lives.

It was also a place with strong military power. Recently they had reinforced

their walls with newly discovered anti-magic material. In response to the Empire expanding their army, they also were building a fortress as their next defensive measure.

To the side of the city that was both a fortress and merchant hotspot were Reiji and his party.

After defeating Rajas, they had accepted Hadorius' invitation and gone on a victory parade. There were many citizens there celebrating Reiji's false achievement of annihilating the mazoku army.

The present time was a few days afterwards, and they were staying at an inn.

It was unusual for the hero and princess to be there, since as it had been for time immemorial, the hero typically stayed in the prince's residence. However, this time Titania had requested to reside in a town inn.

Giving the excuse that he was only an ally, Hadorius did not stay with them. For this reason Titania herself was always wary about him.

The calmed down Reiji, Mizuki, and Titania sat down on the sofas in a circle facing each other.

Pouring herself a glass of rosewater, Mizuki swallowed it down in a single gulp and sighed.

"The parade was amazing huh."

“Yeah. They probably spent more money than they did for the one in Metel.”

Reiji agreed with Mizuki. The parade had lasted 3 days; three times longer than the one in Metel, which had only lasted a day.

Mizuki casually spoke.

“It only came to me because of this parade, but Kurant has quite a bit of money huh. Although it’s governed by that man...”

“Hadorius-dono is a high-standing aristocrat with large amounts of territory including Kurant. Having abundant assets with large political and military power, Hadorius is a noble with no equal.”

As Mizuki looked out the window with a complicated face, Titania was the one who gave her an answer.

Hadorius governed an area second only to the the royal capital. If they thought about the places they had gone the past few days, there were 3 things they had noticed.

The military power to contest the mazoku general, the assets to hold a large parade, and the political power to do that as well. He had all of those. He also had an intense personality befitting it.

“But still, is it okay to say it how we did? It’s not like I had done it all.”

The defeat of Rajas had taken all of them together. Wasn’t saying that he had

done it alone excessive?

“About that... sorry. But proclaiming that is beneficial for our country as well.”

“Yeah. I know.”

The result was that Hadorius had encouraged the population whose morale was low after seeing the mazoku's strength. Knowing that, Titania also acknowledged what he was doing, and Reiji understood that. But in actuality, his contribution was small.

Mizuki replied sullenly,

“What a common story. Using other's achievements and the situation to their own benefit; it reeks of nobles. And then it even appeals to other countries.”

“That's precisely right, and is why you can't be careless about Hadorius. He ensnared Suimei into a trap and boldly used Reiji-sama for political purposes, all the while keeping Graziella-dono in check.”

Saying so, Titania repeatedly warned Reiji against being negligent about Hadorius. She was extremely wary of him. Ever since Reiji had met Hadorius, he'd had a bad feeling about him. At first he thought it was just that he didn't like him, but now he realized it was probably more than just that.

While thinking so, Reiji inquired to Titania.

“Hey Tia. What do you think about the way Suimei and the others were used

as a decoy? Aside from the fact that he and I are friends and all, in the end the Astel Kingdom people...”

“It’s true, for me the matter is complicated. If I think about the damage due to the mazoku and the people, then it might be that there was no other way.”

Beginning with that, Titania lowered her head solemnly.

To her sudden bow, Reiji and Mizuki didn’t know how to respond, letting out awkward noises while Titania apologized.

“I’m very sorry Reiji-sama and Mizuki. When I heard about it that’s what I was thinking.”

“Well, it’s fine. I guess in Titania’s shoes one could only think that way. Right Mizuki?”

“...Yeah”

Despite having agreed, Mizuki remained with a sad face as if she was forced to have done so.

To her, Suimei was her very first close friend. He wasn’t her lover, but he very well could have been. Once again looking at the window, she lamented somewhat.

“Suimei-kun. In the end we couldn’t find you, huh.”

“It’s okay. If it’s Suimei then he’s definitely fine.”

“Because he’s cunning?”

“Yeah. And besides, remember what teacher said?”

Saying that, Reiji recalled Felmenia’s words.

–If it’s about Suimei then he’s surely fine.

When they parted she had said such. Although it surely was out of consideration for their worries,

“Her voice didn’t sound calm. Considering white flame dono being white flame dono, she might know something. It’s also not impossible that she captured Suimei.”

“Captured... how?”

“That would be by magic after all. Even in our country, white flame dono is the genius sorcerer wielding magic never seen before even in our country.”

“Ah...”

At Titania’s words, Mizuki remembered Felmenia’s words. Reiji also clenched his fists.

At that moment they heard a knock. Soon after, Roffery's voice.

"Excuse me. Reiji-sama, may I enter?"

"Roffery? Ah, yes"

"Then.... T-this is, princess Titania! I'm sorry!"

What could be wrong with Roffery? He had a face as if he had done something wrong by entering and hastily lowered his head. Most likely he had some strange thoughts as he thought it was just Titania and Reiji.

"No it's fine. Mizuki is also here."

"Eh? Oh that's true."

He slowly put on a dumbfounded face as he said so. It was a good break in the atmosphere. With that, Mizuki faced him with a grin.

"Hey, what in the world could you be thinking?"

"Ha?! T-there's no way that I could be thinking anything strange!"

"But I didn't say anything?"

"A, Awaaaaa"

Realizing his mistake, Roffery looked this way and that way as he panicked.

Feeling pity for the man, Reiji said 'Mizuki' aloud.

Thereupon Mizuki confessed and told him that it was a joke all the while having a pleasant yet mischievous face.

Reiji then inquired about the business that Roffery had.

"Roffery, what happened?"

"Yes, a messenger from Lord Hadorius has come."



Reiji, responding to Hadorius' sudden invitation, followed the messenger and passed onto his grounds. Right now, he was in front of his private room with a hard face.

Then, he heard music from somewhere. A musician must have started playing. The music resounded through the air and walls; a calming tune. While listening to the music, Reiji prepared to enter the room.

As he left the inn earlier, Titania had told him to be cautious and Mizuki for him to be careful. The other party was Hadorius. Although he had heard to not push himself, as he thought about that he shook his head.

The noble that was waiting for him inside this room was none other than Hadorius that he couldn't be careless around. It was only baseless conjecture, but he had a strong feeling that from here on out he would be receiving an audience from Hadorius many times. There was no need to say that he didn't want to do such. Or rather it was that he knew that Hadorius was a man of rapid pace.

Reascertaining his determination, Reiji knocked on the door.

Hadorius asked who it was, and responding that he had arrived, he heard an "enter."

Entering, before his eyes was a luxurious reception room. Taking a step in, they gave a business-like exchange of greetings. Standing in front of the door, he saw Hadorius sitting elegantly on a chair.

"Hero-dono, won't you sit?"

"In my country, visitors sit in the seat when they are told to do so in, so I am somewhat hesitant to just sit anywhere."

At those words, Hadorius had an unintelligible expression as he raised his voice in slight bemusement.

"Hou... hero-dono's country seems to value respect quite a bit. Then must I tell you where to sit?"

Following his gaze, he saw a glass on the table that reflected his face and a quivering red liquid.

“Is this alcohol?”

“Yes, it’s grape wine. The taste isn’t bad.”

Not bad huh... but,

“I’m extremely sorry, but...”

“You don’t drink?”

“In my country, those who are not of age cannot drink, so I will refrain.”

With a disappointed face, Hadorius took another drink.

“Hmm, then is there some reason for that?”

“Until they reach 20, the ability for people to process alcohol is low. Alcohol that remains in the body has adverse effects, which is why there are such laws in place.”

Hearing the explanation, Hadorius looked at the contents of his glass.

“To the drink containing the goddess’s blood, there was that kind of thing, huh. And for it to be banned, how harsh... or rather maybe it’s to raise the

talents of people as much as possible.”

As if he had forgotten about Reiji, he stared at his glass while saying that to no one in particular. He was in deep thought. To the unmoving Hadorius, Reiji frankly asked.

“Why did you call me today?”

“It’s nothing, I merely wanted to talk to you.”

“This doesn’t feel like the atmosphere of a talk for fun.”

“Fu, sorry.”

What he was sorry for was very clear. Upon entering the room earlier, there was a tense atmosphere permeating the entire space. Upon pointing that out, Hadorius put on a contemptuous smile as if he had passed and gave out an apology that could not possibly have any real meaning.

There was a relaxedness in his behavior. The composure of the strong. Because he was a hero his intentions were conveyed to reality.

With a monotonous stare, Hadorius stared sympathetically at the glass and then spoke,

“Why have you, the hero, taken up this subjugation of the demon king?”

“To save the people of this world.”

What Reiji said was the same as he had said to Almadias. Even now that reason had not changed. Yet Hadorius,

“The people you are trying to save have no relation to you, correct? You gain nothing by doing so. And yet, you still want to save them?”

“What are you trying to say, your honor?”

“I merely wanted to know where your noble train of thought came from.”

“...?”

What did this man want from him with that kind of question. Between that inexplicable question and his pitying face, he couldn't tell Hadorius' intentions. If he were scrutinizing him for his ambitions, then it would be obvious that he was looking for weaknesses and yet, why did this man asked him a question that stunk of ulterior motives.

After gazing at him with such a disconcerting face and asking him that uninteresting question, Hadorius finally let up with a sneer.

“Well that's fine. Then I'll ask again, what kind of place was your world?”

“What kind of place?”

“Yes, if you compare it to this world, that kind of thing.”

Was it fine to just compare the two worlds? He had had a similar talk with Almadias and the others.

“If I compare the two worlds, the other was much more advanced technologically. While this world has magic, there’s no comparison between their convenience.”

“Technological advancement... the earlier talk about alcohol. Is it also due to that?”

Reiji responded quietly with a yes. Then, Hadorius suddenly got up and walked over to the window. While looking at the scenery,

“Hero-dono, what do you think of this world?”

“Compared to my original world there are some inconveniences, but it’s a good world.”

“Good world, huh.”

In Hadorius’ voice was a tinge of disappointedness. The intentions of his earlier question were still unknown yet Hadorius asked another.

“Hero-dono, what is outside of the window?”

It was as if he was asking him to look outside. Reiji approached slightly and looked out from the third floor, seeing the district and the lives of the working people. The city that began to be enveloped by the twilight was illuminated by the stars and flickering lamps. In the distance he could see the blue and green lamps characteristic of the pleasure district.

“That’s, is there something?”

“This world. It hasn’t changed for hundreds of years. Everyone wakes and sleeps at the same time, works at the same time, loves at the same time, has kids at the same time, and then die. Technology remains idle, countries rise and fall, and the people’s mindsets never change. Progress is forever frozen.”

Saying that, Hadorius remarked “This place is forever the goddess’ playground” in a distant voice. Did this man lament that fact, hate it? It’s true that civilization and culture advancements were closely tied to the nature of human beings. While everyone has things they want, isn’t wishing for the impossible a different matter?

“And you, hero-dono, who has come from an advanced world, do you still think this world is nice?”

“The peace and safety of the people, is that not the way it should be? Unreasonable changes result in strife and conflict. In the other world such disputes and conflicts have yet to die out.”

“...”

Hadorius remained silent and Reiji sunk into thought.

“—It’s a bit sudden but, hero-dono I’d like you to go to the empire.”

“Eh?”

“In the empire, Grazielle has begun to move. You, with your morals and beliefs, I’d like you to stay there for a while.”

Hadorius clearly declared such. Those words that left no room for dispute obviously conflicted with Reiji’s plans.

“Is that an order?”

“Of course.”

“But I have no such obligation. My number one priority is the subjugation of the demon king Nakushatra.”

“You’re right. But hero-dono. The one who came running was Gregory right?”

As he said so, the atmosphere permeating the room changed. Of course the reason was none other than because of Hadorius and Reiji.

“That, is that a threat?”

“If that’s how you want to take it then that’s fine. It’s just, he hasn’t violated any military regulations. Although he also hasn’t been investigated either. So

your thoughts are baseless accusations.”

“You! On top of using my friend as bait, you say that?!”

“That was merely saving the majority by throwing away the minority. What, if it’s about your friend it’s fine to just wait. After all, the search is still going on. Whether he’s alive or not, eventually we’ll find something out. We just don’t have any information right now.”

Saying that, Hadorius snorted as if this was all just a boring talk.

“Although he’s probably dead.”

“How dare you talk like that.”

As Reiji’s anger boiled up, Hadorius curtly replied “It’s only a possibility.”

“Don’t you think you’ve done anything wrong to Suimei?”

“If I say I do, will you stop being so sour?”

“Y-you!”

That question was unforgivable. Grinding his teeth and glaring at Hadorius, Reiji’s rage was overflowing. It wasn’t that he had forgotten his manners, but rather that his anger had overwhelmed them. Yet despite that, Hadorius continued on as if nothing was wrong.

“Suimei Yakagi was it. That person was just a mistake of the army. There’s no reason to direct that anger at me.”

“You fuck!”

Reiji couldn’t control himself and threw a punch. He had long since lost his self control. He had few thoughts about the consequences of his actions, right now he had not the mind to think about that.

His fist was stopped with one hand by Hadorius.

“Wha...?”

“Hmm.”

Hadorius was staring at Reiji with a bored look.

(This man...)

He hadn’t used his full strength. Yet considering that he his power was tremendously increased due to the goddess’ blessing, and that Hadorius had stopped his fist without batting an eye.

Letting go of his fist, Hadorius turned around and once again looked out the window.

“Concentration is vital. Like this you’re still far from the demon king. It is necessary for you to gain experience and grow stronger. By the way, about the empire...”

Reiji had no choice, considering Hadorius implied he would do something to Gregory.

“...I’ll go to the empire. But don’t touch Gregory and those close to me. And then, about Suimei.”

“We’ll help with the search. After all, he’s still of use.”

“You...”

Was he still saying that? But Reiji’s hands were tied in this situation. It was frustrating but, Reiji silently turned heel, making a show of quiet resistance.

The moment he reached the door and grasped the doorknob.

“—Hero-dono, there is something I need to tell you.”

“What?”

“From now on you will meet many enemies. There will be humans, yes, but also many other races.”

Why would he be saying such a thing. It couldn’t be that,

“Do you just want to tell me that what I said to Rajas was idiotic?”

“No that was a relief to me as well.”

“Eh?”

What Hadorius said was unexpected to Reiji. Certainly he thought that Hadorius would say something about how Reiji asked the mazoku why they fight.

“Hero-dono, this place is different than your world. It’s good to think about the things here and change your actions accordingly. But it is meaningless to only think about matters regarding your fight with the mazoku.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I’m talking about him. He needs no reason to attack humans and other races, I predict that you might find that he is an enormous existence that in itself exists to cause the downfall of humanity.”

“An enormous existence? That, what could...”

“Right now, you don’t need to know that. Therefore, your question is needless.”

With that, Hadorius closed the matter. Whether that was advice or a warning, Reiji didn’t know.

“Then, is that all?”

“Yes, for that. There is one more thing.”

What reason could he have for saying so much? Looking away out the window, he asked another question.

“Hero-dono. After this is all over, what do you wish for?”

“Nothing particularly. I have no need for anything.”

“Status, honor, wealth, women. You know that anything you might possibly wish for on this earth is in your grasp?”

“How crude. I’m not fighting for anything like that.”

“I see. Then that is all. Go to the Empire and take your time and rest.”

Leaving without a word, Reiji headed towards the inn.

“A summoned hero...”

From the second floor, Hadorius gloomily watched Reiji’s back as he left before turning his gaze to the sky. As the skies darkened to a gloomy dusk, Hadorius, alone, asked aloud a question to Reiji who was not present.

“Hero Reiji. What do you think of this world? Earlier when you said you thought this world was good. Were those your true feelings? This rotten, frozen world that has no future because of the goddess?”



There's no library.

Filas Filia in the Empire. The capital of a country with an army that is controlled by and only moves due to the emperor's orders and said to be a military state by both themselves and other countries. If one hears that, they might think it's a brutish state, but they also excelled in academics and information control, having a splendid library. Supposedly having a collection of books dating back to the founding of the country, it was the most suitable location to gather information.

That was what Suimei heard before heading there but, after looking and looking for a building like that, he'd come up with nothing. At this point, it might be correct to just say there isn't one but,

“That's...?”

It wasn't like Suimei had no sense of direction. While it's true that Suimei had gotten lost in the Astel castle Camelia, leaving that aside, the Filas Filia's city structure was truly confusing. The main road was fine, but as soon one entered into one of the branching streets, there was nothing but residences. Having went off in a random direction, he tried to go back, but ultimately got lost in this labyrinth-like maze.

He suddenly stopped and looked around. To his side was the seemingly never ending pleasure quarters. Just before were the vivid red bricks of the residency district. How in the world had he ended up here? At this rate he wouldn't be able to find out anything about the hero summoning.

At great pains he had finally reached a place where he might be able to find out more about the summoning ritual, and yet here he was in another predicament.

Thinking that he would use magic to figure it out, at that moment,

“You're, in the way. Space. Move please.”

He heard a cute voice with unusual pauses, sounding like someone who was learning by ear. But it also had an element of annoyance woven in as if scolding him. Turning around, he saw a familiar figure.

With purple twintails and an elaborate eyepatch, the otherworldly gothic lolita appearance was striking. He was right, it was familiar. Or rather, unforgettable.

It was undoubtedly the girl he met in the station, Liliana Zandike. Although it seemed she wasn't alone. In front of her were two red hooded robed men standing opposite to one another. At first glance, you could tell both weren't there to be friends.

One of the robed men turned and spoke to Liliana, looking as if he were to scold an unreasonable child.

“It’d be fine if you just did what you conveyed earlier to your father.”

“Annoying. I have, no position to interfere with the objective of the colonel.”

“We’ll do something about that. I’m saying I want you to be quiet.”

“How many times do I have to make you stop saying the same things?”

The man asked politely. Liliana said it was useless, having no intention to back down. To which, one of the robed men responded in displeasure.

“Even if we ask like this, you won’t listen?”

“Yes. That’s why...”

“Then it can’t be helped, I guess I’ll have to have you feel some pain.”

Upon saying that, one of the men began to gather a bit of his magic. In that instant, he also took out a wand about as long as his arm. In response, Liliana showed no fear or surprise, and ascertained his intentions.

“Are you sure you want to say that to me, one of the twelve Yuuetsu?”

“Hah? One of the empire’s human weapons? In the end it’s all an exaggeration. After all, you’re nothing more than a brat!”

“If you won’t listen to me then it can’t be helped. Go beg my father for

forgiveness.”

...Suimei didn't know the circumstances, but it seemed there would be some trouble. Honestly speaking, it looked like two adults tormenting a child. Although if you consider the fact that Liliana was part of the military...

(But she's really just a child huh)

Having something like this happen here would only spell trouble later. He didn't have any reason to save them, but he also didn't have any reason not to. Walking over, he spoke.

“Ah... if you're in the middle of something sorry but uh.”

“What is it?”

“You are...”

The three people all turned towards Suimei. They had varying reactions, one face twisted as if he was in the way, another doubtful, and the third surprised in recognition.

“You guys, who are bullying a small girl in this kind of place.”

“What?! An unrelated guy is butting in!”

“Can't be helped, I happen to be here after all.”

“Here and so what?”

“Adults are bullying a girl.”

“Well however I look at it it’s your win but, what would you say if you saw something like this?”

“That those robed men seem to be doing something?”

The smooth talking robed man hinted at their true abilities, but in the first place Suimei didn’t know that. Responding with scorn in a prideful voice, the smooth talking man’s face distorted past that of irritation.

“Are you a country bumpkin that doesn’t know the special robes that high ranked people wear?”

At that moment, Liliana spoke in a cautious voice.

“Why, are you here?”

“Hmm? I just came along this road when this happened.”

“Is there something, wrong with your head? You have, nothing to do with this.”

Liliana rejected his answer. ‘Since you have no reason to butt in, go away’. Is

the underlying meaning behind her words.

“Is he someone you know?”

“No, not...”

“Ah, we met earlier and got to know each other a bit.”

“! You!”

Being exposed for her white lie, Liliana became angry, and secretly stuck out her tongue at him. ‘I was going to let you go but it seems you won’t let me do that,’ is the meaning it had.

“I see. So he’s not unrelated.”

“Then I’ll hurt you too.”

Accompanying their words was a rise in magic power. The smooth talking man also took out his wand. The Imperial capital was a more dangerous place than he’d thought. Looking to the side, Suimei saw Lefille looking at him with an amazed look.

“An idiot, are you? Having no relation to this and still interfering. Or rather, having no relation, you’re an idiot.”

“Idiot, how mean. If I saw this and just abandoned a little girl then it’d come

back to haunt me, of course I'd get involved. Rather, what in the world actually happened for it to become like this?"

"That has absolutely no relation to you. Stand back. Those people are even in the imperial guild high rankers."

"How thoughtful."

As Suimei refused Liliana's order, in that moment,

"Are you sure you have the leisure to be talking right now?"

Saying that with a sneer, the vulgar man began casting a spell. The expanding magic, as if obeying something, pulsed as the spell construction rapidly sped up. As the spell neared completion, finally the invocation aria was spoken.

"...flame, Red Blaze!"

It was a magic primarily made up of the invocation key word. As the flame pillar began to spring up, the crude spoken man moved his arm like a 人 and the pillar moved in accordance. As his arms moved the flame finally took up a form like a sword, and then the man faced Liliana and brought it down. The attack came from the right side in front of her. For the eyepatched Liliana, it was a blindspot.

However, Liliana narrowly evaded it, and the flame sword came crashing into the ground, shattering into fragments.

The same scene repeated until the ground was smoldering and a stink rose up into the air.

The flame sword may have skimmed Liliana, as a part of her clothes were burnt.

“Heh, doesn’t seem like you’re talking now, human weapon. Isn’t this just a one-sided fight? I guess your achievements were all lies.”

“The supposed valor in the battlefield is nothing but nice stories. You fighting on the battlefield, after all it must have just been lies you told Captain Rogue to raise your own rank.”

The men threw scoffs at Liliana’s lack of counterattack. In response, for a moment, Liliana radiated a dangerous aura. But the men didn’t notice at all, causing Liliana to speak in a mix of shock and her normal voice.

“Being, only able to graze me despite, attacking from blindspot, yet so, easygoing...”

As soon as she said that, the pressure increased. It was Liliana’s doing. Suimei had received this before as well, but right now it wasn’t the station. Her magic density at the maximum, she wanted to deprive them of their superiority. For fights between magicians, the ability to perceive magic power was of utmost importance. If one expanded their own area of control, he could obstruct the opponent from invoking spells.

“What the...”

Did the foul mouthed man really have time to be talking? The smooth talking man began an incantation.

“Ku— don’t make light of me! Oh wind that eternally...”

Wind magic. He probably thought nothing of Suimei, only aiming at Liliana. Thinking that, Suimei gathered magic into his index finger and began to manipulate the surroundings.

“I’ll be borrowing some of that blaze magic.”

With that, as nonchalantly as borrowing an eraser from a friend, the blaze of the man dispersed and then began to construct and gather at Suimei’s fingertip. It was as if the blaze vanished for a split second and now the same fire began to concentrate at Suimei’s fingertips,

“Wha...My flame just!?”

The crude mouthed man exclaimed his surprise. Glaring at Suimei, he demanded an explanation.

“Well, I did just tell you I was going to borrow it.”

“There’s no way that you could...”

Doesn’t exist huh. Suimei, guessing the man’s thoughts, took a deep breath.

“So they’re one of those people. No matter where you go there will be people who deny things that happen right in front of their faces. Usually, they don’t even think about how it might have happened at first.”

“What the fuck are you muttering about? Spill it already!”

“I told you I borrowed it. Just a little more and I’ll have full control. Well then, I don’t want to listen to any more of this pointless chitchat.”

As Suimei spat those words out, the smooth talking man recontinued his incantation.

“Wind, take form!”

“Fly.”

In response, Suimei fired the stolen blaze. The wind magic of the smooth talking man was nothing but a breeze against the concentrated flame, being swallowed up pitifully.

Suimei didn’t move an inch. His thumb and middle finger pointed a line straight to the smooth talking man’s arm. At that moment, he snapped his fingers, the sound ringing out. The man’s wand was smashed in to fragments, his arm snapped back, and what remained was just an empty space.

“It went out...”

The man’s surprised voice faded. At the same moment the smoke reached the

man, he was struck in the solar plexus.

In the palm of the striking hand was a strange glove. Upon pouring magic into it, its effectiveness as a magic item was evident. As it struck the nerves, it was evident that the men had made a grave mistake, as a piercing scream rang out.

The shout didn't continue as the man fainted in shock and fell down.

Looking to the side, the crude mouthed man was squashed by a powerful magic, collapsed in front of Liliana.

Confirming it was all over, Liliana spoke.

“Let's change, locations.”



Leaving behind the two men, Suimei and Liliana went to a place where they wouldn't be recognized for the previous incident. It was a little ways off from the upper class area, and after walking for some time after the bricks changed from red to grey, they stopped.

Patting the dust off of her skirt, Liliana spoke reluctantly in an annoyed voice.

“Ugh, it was an unneeded, meddling.”

They were unthankful words. Ignoring them, Suimei asked,

“So, who were they?”

“They have, no relation to you.”

To her flat rejection, Suimei replied “Well, I guess so.”

“And, what are you, doing here?”

“Nothing really, just a walk. You were, Lilia correct?”

“I don’t remember, telling you my name... why do you, know my name?”

“Hmm? That kind of thing...”

“I see. I understand. The one the military police arrested. The unfortunate, stalker. So are you here today too to...”

“No thats not it, I heard from the official in the station. Why am I a stalker?”

“I understand. It was a joke. Because I can’t follow.”

“You...”

Smothering her own self-confidence, she closed her eyes. Suimei dropped his shoulders tiredly in reponse to Lilia. It was hard to understand someone who

said it was a joke with such a serious face.

Troubled with Liliana, Suimei let out a sigh when suddenly, the surrounding magic intensified. After a little, Suimei could feel a hint of acid or poison in the surroundings. It was different from earlier, rather the same as back in the station.

“It’s about time, you answer. What were, you doing here?”

Liliana’s eyes fixed onto Suimei as she asked.

The nearby buildings and scenery shimmered like the haze of asphalt on a hot day, and Liliana approached through this dense magic haze.

It was an interrogation.

As if provoking her, Suimei gave off a laugh, and then proceeded to make pointless chitchat while shrugging his shoulders.

“What, are foreigners not allowed to take a stroll? I went through the proper procedures to gain residence in this country, alright?”

“This is, close to the upper class quarters. Loitering about without purpose, of course you would be suspicious. Now answer.”

“I think that describes the earlier two men more though.”

Liliana didn't respond. It's true the imperial second lieutenant had said so. If she was an imperial soldier, then this questioning could only be one part of a larger matter. There was a part about that she didn't understand but, that could be ignored.

Suimei, who had no particular reason to resist, suddenly turned face with a sigh and properly confessed.

"I was looking for a library. The famous big one in the empire."

"The, Imperial University Library?"

"I'd like to find something out. Here, it's this..."

Saying that, Suimei showed Liliana the handwritten map he had received from Jilbert.

"...Why are you talking in that way. Don't be overly friendly with me."

"Isn't it fine? Now tell me. I even brought sweets."

"I don't need it. Don't treat me like a child, please. Also, the map is wrong..."

"Uh..."

Pointing out this and that, she was actually quite nice. But what was wrong with the map. As Suimei knit his eyebrows, Liliana took another look at the map

and then once again declared that it was wrong.

“...That idiotic legal loli. She just told you lies.”

The ward headman of the place Suimei lived. Jilbert Griga. She got along with Lefille, finding free time to come and mess around at the house and also used abusive words against Suimei but—that was relevant but today when he had told her he was going to the library she had cheerfully drawn a map. She had good humor, and Suimei had thought she had a nice personality but it seemed that she had quite the broad character.

To Liliana, who stated that “There are four wrong roads,” Suimei exasperatedly responded “seriously?” as he could do nothing but sigh. Afterwards, he would have to vent at Jilbert or give her some kind of punishment.

“Then uh, how should I proceed from here?”

“That’s why, I”

“Okay. I’ll add three more candies. Are we okay now?”

“Why are you, trying to bait me with candy?”

“Does it not entice you? Then how about a toy.?”

“Y, you...”

To the not listening Suimei, Liliana trembled. But perhaps understanding it was useless, she sighed as if signifying it was Suimei's win.

"...I get it. I'll guide you, so come."

"Sorry. I'll definitely buy you candy so please forgive me."

"I don't need it. Once we're done go away as soon as possible."

How curt.



As Liliana led the way, Suimei followed behind. Occasionally, Liliana would turn around and talk depending on the atmosphere, although she maintained her cold dangerous tone.

"In one way or another, you're quite nice."

"Did you say something?"

"No, it was nothing. So, what were you doing in this area Liliana? Could it be you got involved in something?"

"...Patrol."

As Suimei continued, finally on the correct path to the library, he decided it

was question time, throwing a question at Liliana, who may or may not have been particularly willing to answer.

“You’re working hard. But well, isn’t that the job of the military police?”

“You know well. You’re right, but recently there’s been quite a few incidents in the imperial capital, so they’re short handed.”

“Ah, the coma incidents, right?”

“Yes. If you don’t want to get caught up in it, you shouldn’t walk alone in places like that.”

Hearing that, Suimei gave an appropriate inference.

“Meaning, it’s been happening in the upper class districts.”

“...”

“Hellooo, respond please.”

Liliana didn’t respond, walking in silence without turning around. Maybe she was paying attention to the road, although just earlier she was looking back and talking quite frequently.

It couldn’t be because he was more or else right, could it? Just before Suimei was about to speak up to rid the awkward silence, Liliana spoke.

“...There’s something I want to ask.”

“What is it?”

“Are you, not afraid of me?”

Looking back slightly, she stared at Suimei.

“Huh? No but... why are you suddenly asking such a thing?”

“Even though I threatened you, you’re just continuing on like nothing happened. Other people would just cower in fear, but earlier you actually helped me deal with those two people. Why?”

“Well, when you tried to coerce me I was a bit nervous. And aren’t you younger, as well? It was actually quite embarrassing.”

Certainly if one has a lot of magic power, they will have a strong ability to dominate an area. If one can one-sidedly dominate the area, then it would definitely have a mental effect. Therefore, that time when she tried to coerce him, the fact that the air was filled with her magic power was the main reason for his nervousness.

But if you succumbed to just that, then you would be helpless. It was true that Liliana’s spirit miasma Psychic Acid was quite powerful but, Suimei wasn’t ordinary.

“...I see. You’re a strange one.”

Saying that, Liliana turned back around. There would definitely be people who thought that she looks eerie. Furthermore, her military achievements would also only create fear in ordinary people. But why would she think that he would freeze up just because of something like that?

“Or rather, maybe I should put it, I got a little tense unconsciously.”

“Well, more or less. But I was taught by my superiors that such a thing is a necessary. For the army, it’s important that you aren’t made light of. Inspiring fear or awe in your enemy is essential.”

To Liliana’s words, Suimei sighed. Taking his gaze off of her and looking up at the sky, he spoke.

“Liar.”

“...”

“Right? That coercive behavior you always run around with, it’s not to overwhelm the enemy but to protect yourself. It’s a kind of vigilance. Am I wrong?”

“Why, do you think so?”

“With those people there was no reason for you to do it, and you react too much to the surroundings. In your words, in your movements. It was the same

at the station, and you would also subjugate them right after. And last, I just have a feeling.”

“...”

“Essentially it was to just keep them away, like how a dog barks to keep others away. Be honest, why do you act so menacing to everyone around you? Like how you were talking just after the incident with those guys earlier. You know not everyone around you is an enemy right?”

While Suimei drilled Liliana, they turned the corner and saw the sign of a restaurant. There, children were playing with a ball. But perhaps noticing something was off, they quickly scattered like the young of spiders.

Liliana glanced at the scene before them,

“...There’s, no need to reply, is there. But if there’s something I should say, its that I’m a military personnel and you’re a citizen. That’s all there is to it.”

“I think it would be better if you acted a little more normally but... I guess it’s none of my business. My bad.”

As Suimei apologized for overstepping his bounds, Liliana mumbled something.

“... name.”

“Hmm?”

“Your, name. I don’t, know it. It’s unfair for only you to know so tell me it.”

Realizing that he had never given his name, Suimei replied.

“Suimei Yakagi.”

“Shweimei Hakagi.”

“...”

“What? Shweimei...”

“No no, Suimei Yakagi.”

“Shu...su...Suimei Yakagi. Like that?”

Suimei nodded, signifying that it was close enough. As Liliana remarked “your name, changed,” Suimei gave a wry smile.

Exchanging names and turning another corner, they ran into a man in military attire. With swept back gray-black hair, he was a man in his prime. With a sword on his back, he was dressed cleanly and precisely.

Seeing him, Suimei recognized him from earlier. It was the man at the church who Lefille recognized as strong. When Liliana’s eyes passed over him, she stiffened as if nervous.

It seemed she knew him. As the man saw her, he put on a slightly strict look and walked closer.

“Liliana. What are you doing here?”

“Colonel...”

His guess had been spot on. Liliana seemed to be surprised, and bound with a nervous look, didn't respond.

“Liliana. Answer.”

“T-the matter you were talking about, I was investigating this area.”

“That matter? You don't need to do that. It's the job of others.”

“But,”

“You only need to listen to my words. Don't do unnecessary things outside of what you've been assigned and behave.”

“...Yes.”

With a piercing gaze, the colonel said such strict words, to which Liliana visibly sagged her shoulders. The scene would make any guy distraught.

However, the man's words were certainly...

"You are? Why are you with Liliana?"

"Eh? I was the guy being guided to the Imperial library. I'm still unfamiliar with the area, so when I got lost she helped me."

"Ah..."

"You're not from the Empire?"

"Just recently I came here."

After Suimei's curt response, the man scrutinized him from head to toe, then closed his eyes. Was he looking for something suspicious? And now did he realize there wasn't any such thing? Taking a breath, he spoke in a calm voice.

"I see. It's true the capital isn't too safe right now. It's especially true for the places you don't know well, so please don't walk around at night."

"Thanks, I will keep that in mind."

"And, for the imperial library, go straight to the end and then take a left. You'll be able to see it from there."

It seemed he wanted him to go alone from here.

Suimei gave a small bow and thanked him once again, and then the man turned to Liliana and said two words.

“...Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

Without complaint, Liliana followed behind the man. Turning their backs on Suimei, they left through a small road. As their shadows vanished, they left no hint of being there in the first place.

“I didn’t get a chance to buy the sweets...”

Being left behind, Suimei remarked such. But since they both lived in the imperial capital, there was a good chance they would meet once again. It was a one-sided promise but, he would definitely fulfill it then.

...Liliana had told that man it was an investigation. Evidently it wasn’t a patrol as she had said then. Somewhere he had a sort of gloomy feeling, but in the end it had nothing to do with him.

“Well it’s fine. I have things I should do now.”



“That took quite a while.”

After finishing his first lookover of the library, Suimei twisted his body and looked over to the exit while cracking his neck. The library's size could be called unparalleled, and the book collection was also quite vast. Because he had arrived late today, he limited himself to just finding the bookshelves with the most important books. Thinking that next time he came he would have to also prepare various magic tools, Suimei looked up at the sky.

The sky was already the color of the dark. The waxing moon looked like it was swallowing the dark, as if telling him that it was already past when he should have returned.

Suddenly he heard the sound of the gate opening behind him.

"Excuse me. Oh, if it isn't Yakagi-kun."

"Ah, Mr. Librarian."

The one who had come out was the elf librarian that had shown him around the building today, Romion. Wearing the library uniform, he had long ears characteristic of the ones who called themselves elves.

"Thanks for today."

"No, I've only become a librarian recently, so it was also good practice for me in guiding others."

To his modest words, Suimei replied cheerfully.

“Well you did it quite smoothly.”

“It’s because I’m an elf and I also have self-confidence in my memory.”

As he said that, he tapped his forehead with his index finger. Was the memory of elves in this world good? Certainly, with their long lives that couldn’t be compared to those of humans, memory might be an essential trait.

After talking for a while, Romion said, “alright with this I’ll be going,” and left.

Suimei also decided to head back. However, he didn’t know the roads well, and tried to go back... that is until he came across ‘that’ right before the upper class district.

“N...”

While walking he noticed it. The area in front of him had not a ray of light. It was as if it was the boundary between two completely different cities; the beautiful city landscape that was just a few steps back like an island in the murky shadows. It was unnatural. When he left the library, there should have been a waxing moon. It wasn’t like there were any nearby tall buildings, or that he was in a shadow, or that there was anything else to block the light, so total darkness should be impossible.

He could feel a faint magic presence. In other words,

(A barrier huh? No, the people in this world don’t know about those so— then did they weaken the light to make it artificially dark, or did something suck up the light?)

Looking around carefully, he searched for traces of magic, any change in the surroundings, and any answers to the current mystery. The shadows were a phenomenon created through magic, it seemed. The high class district had fallen into darkness. Maybe it was the darkness before dawn, but it was much darker than that. What could this be? He could get a feeling from the unsettling air.

“H-help! Please hel...”

“Ah?”

He suddenly noticed from the middle of the darkness a person who came running out begging for help. His voice suggested that he was almost at his limit — something was up.

“You there! Please! Help me!”

“Uh, I don’t really mind but, what’s wrong?”

At the same moment that he asked, the man tripped and tumbled face down. “Are you fine?” Suimei asked, and lent his hand, but the man instead twisted his back around and pointed at something.

“That! That’s after me...”

“That?...!!”

As Suimei was about to respond and ask, in that moment, a hint of a thick magic presence appeared. Perhaps because it was close, an inconceivable form began to seep out from the darkness. Right after, as if part of the darkness was cut off and took form, a short ink colored pitch black robed man appeared in the space in front of Suimei.

“Hi! Hiiii!”

“...”

It was a man in a black robe with the hood covering his eyes, an appearance that didn't tell anything. He was staring at the man who had screamed out in fear. Although he didn't actually know the situation, he got in front of the man who was crawling backwards on his butt, and narrowed his eyes at the suspicious shadow.

(Could it be, this guy?)

That guess suddenly floated up into Suimei's mind. That the person causing the coma incidents in the capital might be this man. Considering the situation, he was probably right.

Having been rolled up into such a situation, Suimei began to feel the adrenaline before a fight, but perhaps the shadow had changed his mind as he then disappeared back into the shadows.

“I, I'm saved...”

“What was that?”

With that, the shadows receded and it was once again the moonlit night in the imperial capital as Suimei and the Astel Kingdom magician Felmenia met up.



A little while after wiping off Felmenia's face. The two of them were heading towards Suimei's place in the imperial capital.

As for the man that he had saved previously, it seemed that he was a noble in the empire, since he kept saying "I will not talk to these plebeians" while spitting out insults and complaints about the shadow until he eventually left.

And then, as for the current situation,

"Fun, fufun, fufu~n."

In the faintly moonlit and star lit capital, the streetlights were few, and there Felmenia walked next to Suimei while smiling. Why was she so happy? Slowly beginning to smile, it was quite cheery. To that girl, Suimei inquired,

"Mm so, Menia. Why were you in a place like this?"

"Yes. So after I arrived at the imperial capital, I used wind magic and tried to look for Suimei but I got lost in that weird place."

So, she went into that place that deprived people of their senses. Suimei could understand the part about her chasing after him. But for her to come

running in tears, he had the wrong impression, however that was that.

“Yeah, I get that. But why were coming to me?”

“Why...did I not tell Suimei-dono before you left Astel?”

Sounding familiar, he tried to remember it. True, when he left the castle, she did say something about coming with him.

“Ah, yeah. You actually came. I thought it was a joke.”

As Suimei said that casually, Felmenia seemed to take it in the wrong way.

“W-was I not allowed to come along?”

“Well it’s not like you’re not allowed, but don’t you have your own duties, you know, job?”

“What are you saying? My duty as the imperial court mage, don’t you know?”

“Wait, he was being serious? I thought he just wanted to restrict that old royal court magician but... that king is quite unreasonable. Anyway, you came here for?”

“Yes! The king wants to lend you aid!”

“That man...”

Looking up into the sky, Almedius' face surfaced in Suimei's mind, and he gave a complicated sigh. Meanwhile, Felmenia kept happily nodding next to him, signifying both that what he said was right as well as that she wasn't opposed to coming along with Suimei.

King Almedius. Freely sending off the best magician of Astel for no particular reason, what was in it for him? Even if he told Felmenia to follow him, he was nothing but a person who only moved to return to his own world, so there would be no advantage in doing so.

No, he knew that Suimei was a magician. Although his time was short at the royal castle, since he revealed to Felmenia the existence of magicians in the other world, if she disclosed that, then it wouldn't be unthinkable that the benefit is to have her learn that magic.

But,

“What's wrong Suimei-dono? Could it be that there is something on my face?”

The person herself had no idea what he was thinking, and innocently tilted her head. With a face that suggested she couldn't possibly fathom being used in another's plan.

(Well, there's no reason to suspect her. I'm sure she has no such plans.)

As he thought that, he shook his head. Pondering things as much as possible was typical for magicians. However, that also had its downsides. In particular

just like right now. Even if he thought another person was displaying their true feelings, he would still look at them with distrust.

(Im such a despicable person...)

Felmenia really wanted to become his strength. Just by looking at her face you could tell. As Suimei thought that, waves of guilt spilled out.

In addition to her coming to his aid, she was one of the few who knew of him being a magician. To be honest, he should be thankful.

“... Alright. Let me redo that. Please lend me your aid.”

“Yes!”

Felmenia replied in great vigor, agreeing to Suimei’s request. Seeing that, Suimei was reminded of something.

“...Menia, it might be a stupid question but, you don’t have like dog ears or something, do you?”

“No? Because I’m not a beast person.”

“Yeah. Sorry. I don’t know why I asked that.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Ha, haa...?”

As soon as Suimei walked up ahead of the dubious Felmenia a bit, Felmenia hurried up from her earlier position with a pitter patter, once again continuing to walk with a grin.

“...Dog-like.”

Is how it probably is.



Having met up once again in the upper class district, Suimei and Felmenia returned to Suimei’s alleyway house.

“Is this the house where Suimei-dono is living?”

“Ah. I just bought it recently. Here.”

Opening the door, Suimei encouraged her to enter. Looking around the inside of the house, there was one person. Just Lefille. It seemed that Jilbert had already left. He would have to voice any complaints to her next time.

“Welcome back, Suimei-kun.”

“Ah, I’m back.”

Is how the exchange went between Suimei and Lefille, who raised a hand in welcome. It had been a long time since someone had said 'welcome back' to Suimei, and he felt a selfish joy. Saying that sort of thing, how long had it been since his father had died?

Suimei closed his eyes. Upon opening them, naturally he found Lefille and Felmenia looking at one another, both not knowing who the other was.

"Um, Suimei-dono. This child is...?"

"Suimei-kun. An acquaintance? I also want an introduction"

"Ah yes. Well then first, this here is the magician who summoned me to this world, the imperial court magician Felmenia Stingray. In order to help me, she came all the way from Metel."

As he first introduced Felmenia to Lefille, it seemed she remembered something, as she widened her eyes as if in surprise.

"Oh! You're the famous White Flame of the Astel Kingdom, Felmenia Stingray!"

Felmenia nodded. Next was introducing Lefille to Felmenia.

"This is Lefille Grakis. While on my journey to Nelferia, we happened to meet by fate and now she is journeying with me as my companion."

"Companion?"

Felmenia had a somewhat bewildered feeling. Well it couldn't be helped considering he was journeying with a little girl. Deciding to tell the complete story whenever Lefille returned to her original form, he ended with a "A lot of things happened," which would result in some confusion right now.

"Lefille Grakis. Pleased to meet you. Call me Lefille."

"Yes, pleased to meet you."

After which the two of them exchanged handshakes. Then, Felmenia turned towards Suimei.

"Suimei-dono. Lefille seems, um, quite refined. Could it be?"

"Ah, you understand? Yes Lefille is quite the good little miss."

"As I thought. I could tell from her conduct, she must be quite high born."

As Felmenia smiled at Lefille, Lefille replied in a quiet tired voice, having possibly thought a little bit about that matter.

"Y, yes. But are you not a noble too? Considering your humble speech."

"No. If I had to guess you're a foreign noble, correct? Then assuming that you're the child of a noble, you should be able to tell from this interaction in itself. But there is no need to worry about it Lefille."

Speaking of it, it felt like Felmenia had always used polite speech to palace guards, maids, anyone that wasn't an enemy. The way she was talking now was a natural extension of that, and in this conversation just now she was being quite nice to children.

As Suimei was pondering about such formalities, Felmenia zealously turned her gaze to him.

“Well then, with that I will be imposing on you from tomorrow and on, so please take care of me.”

“Wha-What?!?”

The scream wasn't Suimei. Rather, as Felmenia brought up the topic they had discussed on the way home, for some reason Lefille became greatly agitated.

“What's wrong?”

“Miss Felmenia, is she really going to live with us?!? SUIMEI-KUN!!!!”

“Well about that. Haven't we already set this place up as our base of operations? And we still have extra space.”

As he said so, Lefille dropped her shoulders as if something extremely unfortunate had happened.

“...A, and I thought finally we would be alone, just the two of us...”

“...?”

Suimei could not hear Lefille’s lamentation. He didn’t really understand, but putting that aside, just as he decided to discuss which room would be Felmenia’s,

“And so, Menia’s room will be...”

“Wha...!”

Once again, Lefille raised her voice in surprise, and pointed a trembling finger towards Suimei.

Her surprise was to the extent that one would have thought she saw a ghost. ‘What in the world could it be,’ thinking that, Suimei looked at Lefille dubiously.

“...What’s wrong?”

“What did you just say, Suimei-kun?!”

“I just said, what’s wrong?”

“Before that!”

“Before that? I was talking about Menia’s room but,”

What was wrong was that? Her expression right now was as if it was a matter of life and death. Then, returning to her usual calmness, she let out a sigh uncharacteristic of such a small child and once again asked.

“...Suimei-kun. That girl... did you really just call her by that?”

“Ahh. Yes but?”

Bewildered, Suimei responded affirmatively, to which Lefille reacted with an unpleasant face.

“Really...tsch”

“And so what’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong, that’s wrong....really?!?”

In response to his question was a shout. As if she had just done some straining exercise, Lefille was breathing heavily, at her wit’s end. Eventually, she calmed down and settled into thought. As if she was a detective or investigator in a drama, she paced back and forth, until finally stopping and looking up to speak.

“Okay. Suimei-kun. From today on, you will call me Lefi.”

“Huh? What?”

“That’s enough just call me by my pet name from today and on! Got it? From now on, immediately, I am, Lefi!”

Lefille stabbed her finger at him with the force of a god. Wincing, Suimei consented.

“Ah. Uh. That’s fine but...”

“Then, well... here, Suimei-kun.”

From her appearance, it seemed she wanted him to do it now.

“Uh, Lefi?”

“...”

“Um, what’s wrong?”

“Y, yes. That’s nice. Not bad. Even good.”

Lefille looked down while saying “yes, yes.” When she raised her head again her face was filled with joy. Felmenia, who saw the whole thing, stared a hole into the ground before looking up at the ceiling. Perhaps she was thinking about something. Repeating the same motions for a while, she then made a surprised face as if she had come across an answer.

“It can’t be...”

“This time it’s Menia. What’s wrong?”

However, without answering his question, Felmenia squatted down as if to meet Lefille’s gaze, and put her hands on both of Lefille’s shoulders.

“That kind of thing is no good. It’s still too early for you.”

“It, it’s not too early! Or rather, it’s not too late!”

Apparently Felmenia was scolding Lefille about something. Although it was pretty vague, Lefille seemed to know exactly what it was, and gave out an urgent shout in resistance.

“... I don’t know what the two of you are talking about, but put it aside. It’s time we talk about the rooms.”

Looking at the two of them who seemed to have gotten into a tangle, Suimei cut in, whereupon Felmenia remembered something and gave him a hard stare.

“Now that you speak of it, there was something I wanted to ask Suimei!”



“Ahhh. They couldn’t finish Rajas. Unfortunate...”

What Felmenia had wanted to ask about was concerning Rajas. Having

received the explanation, she had just finished hearing the whole story.

Suimei, while rubbing his temples with his fingers,

“So? Rajas was definitely?”

“Yes. Reiji-dono did it with one blow. However, after that a blue lightning came out and burnt away the body to nothing.”

“Ah, the remnants of my magic.”

“As expected of Suimei-dono.”

While Felmenia gave off a gesture of admiration, Suimei apologized for causing confusion.

As expected, huh. But to hold out for almost a week against Rajas was quite a feat. Even if you didn't include the 10,000 mazoku he defeated, it still wasn't ordinary.

As Suimei thought so, Lefille, who was sitting next to him, grumbled as her face turned severe.

“Lucas Do Hadorius...”

Lefille repeated the name of the noble who had appeared during the explanation. He had deceived Suimei and the troops to buy time. Suimei, the

affected party, gave a snort.

“So the reason why that guy appeared there was because I was pigeonholed into that area by that noble huh...”

“Yes, as a person from the same Astel Kingdom, I am truly sorry.”

“No, it wasn’t your fault. And neither Suimei’s.”

Lefille said such to cheer up the two of them who had gotten bitter faces. At that point, Suimei hit his fist into his palm in determination.

“That guy, I’m going give him a proper thanks.”

“Mhm. At that time, me too.”

Lefille let out a dangerous aura from her body. From Suimei as well, a similar anger could be felt. At that time he had to part with many people he was getting to know well. That boiling feeling couldn’t be expressed in just a few words.

As that fire burned in both of their eyes, Felmenia began to search for something in her bag.

“And so, there is something I have to show Suimei-dono.”

“Me?”

“Yes. Here.”

What Felmenia pointed at was an old book.

On the spine of the book, in messy handwriting, ‘An inquiry on the hero summoning ritual and history,’ was written.

“This, where did you?”

“While I was sorting records, I came across it so I brought it with me.”

“I see... I looked as well but maybe I missed it.”

“I haven’t read it either yet but, what do you think?”

“It’s a book on the hero summoning ritual, correct? It seems quite the unique book.”

“Do you think it will be of use?”

“Well, it will be good to reference. Thank you.”

“No, to be that thankful is...”

Although she said that, her face was giddy, as if saying ‘I was just praised by

Suimei!'. The nearby Lefille had a sour expression, going 'mumumu,' giving Felmenia a hard stare as if she had let her get ahead. That Suimei didn't see or hear anything because he was engrossed in the book could only be called fate.

Suddenly, Lefille thought of something, and abruptly changed her expression, thoughtfully asking a question to Suimei.

"So... Suimei-kun. You want to return after all?"

"Well yeah."

Suimei said so without looking over, his mind divided half between the book and everything else,

"...!!"

"...!?"

Both Felmenia and Lefille dropped their shoulders, looking down depressedly.

"Really, huh..."

"Yeah. Yeah..."

"Huh? What's wrong with the two of you?"

What in the world could have happened so suddenly? For a moment, it was

like a magic light that had suddenly went out, leaving a black darkness. However, this had nothing to do with a magic light. The air was filled with a stagnant feeling of grief.

It was as if such a heavy invisible burden had been placed on them that he could hear it.

“It’s nothing. Nothing...”

“That’s not good...”

“O, oi. Oi, you two!”

In the end, he couldn’t read anything, his hands full with cheering the two of them up.

Chapter 3: The hero of the second person, Elliot



So I changed my mind about $\frac{2}{3}$ the way through this chapter on the converting first person sections to third person while translating because I think I was losing some of the original meaning even though it sounds more natural in English that way in my opinion. This means there will start to be parts I will label as POVs.

Felmenia and Lefille had better relations than one would have thought.

From the exchange on their first meeting and on, it was like that; both were fairly well-mannered and in the first place they both had strong senses of justice. In both train of thought and outlook they were similar so it didn't take long for them to get along well.

The atmosphere between the two of them didn't have a hint of danger so Suimei had absolutely no worries. To Lefille, she had made an acquaintance that knew this world's magic in detail. For her it was quite the stroke of luck. She had seemed quite annoyed that she was unable to go to the magic institution, but now it appeared that Felmenia was teaching her.

However sometimes it seemed she would behave as if warning Felmenia, but that might have been Suimei's imagination. Anyways, that's how it was.

About two days after meeting up with Felmenia, the three of them paid a visit to the adventure guild branch in the imperial capital, the Twilight Pavilion.

After defeating Rajas, they hadn't gone to a branch even once, so their visit was in order to report that and their activities in the capital.

And so, currently they had just finished telling the female receptionist a harmless summary of the matter regarding Rajas.

"...Yes. Good work. Regarding the matter about Astel, we have heard of it too. As for the merchant group and the related people, it's unfortunate."

"Yes. We would also like to apologize for reporting late."

Suimei bowed his head to the female receptionist. The matter about Rajas had been occupying his thoughts, and considering that he had both left the group midway and that people had died, he thought that it was necessary to

report.

Considering their position they ended up in, it wasn't possible to immediately publicly announce for many days, but with this a load was lifted off Suimei's shoulders.

"No, that was unavoidable right? That you were able to safely arrive is good. Furthermore, we are happy to provide you with any aid you might need, so if there is anything please do contact us."

After the Twilight Pavilion female receptionist said so, Suimei replied with a curt "Thank you very much," and then returned to the table Felmenia and Lefille were at. There, Lefille was holding a ceramic cup with both hands glugging down grape water while Felmenia was coolly looking around at the surroundings. Signalling with a wave of his hand that everything was done, he sat down, upon which Felmenia immediately inquired about it.

"So did it go well?"

"Hmm? Well as in?"

As Felmenia scrunched her face in a difficult expression, Suimei questioned in a nasal voice, to which Lefille answered.

"The report just now. We were listening from here, but you talked more in depth than we had thought. If you tell her that much, then won't Hadorius eventually figure out that you lived? Would that not be disadvantageous to us?"

"Hmm, would it? From the extent that I heard, that man used me as a decoy because it was a good plan. It's not like he was desperate to kill me. I mean don't you agree that I was a nuisance in the beginning as well?"

"You have a point. If Rajas didn't exist, then I think Hadorius wouldn't have resorted to such a plan. In his eyes, Suimei-dono was no more than the friend of the hero that had no powers."

"I see. But if he didn't know about us, wouldn't that be advantageous sometimes? If he doesn't know we exist, then he wouldn't interfere with us and we can poke our noses into things if something happens. It might have unforeseen consequences?"

Putting down the cup of grape water, Lefille explained such. Their current situation could be very useful. Unlike in the Empire, he had used a false name when he registered in Kurant city, so Hadorius probably didn't know he was alive. In that case, if they could preserve their current status, they wouldn't be used by him.

As Lefille had said, one could think that by his own words he may have tied his own hands behind his back in the future. However, Suimei had already considered that and weighed both alternatives against one another.

“Regardless, I want him to take action. Because if he does, then we can provoke him. If he wants to meddle, then I say by all means.”

After saying those fearless words, Suimei added on “and then we can also understand his movements.” To that, Lefille replied.

“That's unexpected. That you want to be at odds with him so much.”

“Hadorius is a man who can purposely involve unrelated people. He's so thick skinned that he will even involve the hero's best friend and then act as if nothing happened; it wouldn't be unthinkable that he would use and throw away Reiji and the others if he deems it worthy. Without knowing his true intentions, he's not someone we can leave alone for a long time.”

“While I also agree it would be good to limit him if possible, even his majesty the king has a hard time interfering with him.”

“It's because of feudalism, I guess it can't be helped. Well, being indefinitely indebted to that guy, from my point of view I feel sorry for him.”

As Suimei thought about the problem of how to handle it, he sighed. Then, deciding to change topic, he decided to ask the two of them what to do from now on. In that moment,

From behind, a beautiful but translucent voice sounded out.

“-Hey, do you guys have a second?”

“You mean us?”

“Ah.”

As Suimei turned around before the person could answer, he saw a young boy

who was the spitting image of beautiful. Gold hair and blue eyes. His white skin was reminiscent of Northern Europeans, yet also not pale. He also had an androgynous appearance. It was a different impression than Reiji, one would call this boy gorgeous.

He was probably similar in age. His clothes looked foreign, as they didn't look like something one would get from the Empire.

That was Suimei's impression of the boy. Due to his sudden appearance, there was a little commotion in the room. If one had to guess why, it would be because he spoke.

"Sorry for being so sudden. My name is Elliot Austein. If I had to say my lineage, well it might sound a little weird for me to be saying it myself, but from the word 'hero' you understand right?"

With the self introduction out of the blue, Suimei and the others' chairs made a rattle.

"And then here is my companion, a priest from the Salvation Church."

"Please call me Christa."

At his mention, the young girl next to him took off her hood and made a curtsy. With her green hair in braids, she had a stiff sullen face as if due to nervousness.

Immediately after, Elliot fixed his gaze onto Lefille. Noticing that, her face changed into one of surprise.

"That face, you must have an idea about the situation, huh."

"It can't be... you guys, did the oracle also...?"

Her face trembling in astonishment, Lefille spoke a few words as if questioning. Seeing her, Elliot smiled and replied in a bright voice.

"That's right. We got a revelation from the goddess Alshuna. We came to welcome you."



They came to welcome her. Did that mean that this boy was the one

summoned in El Meide, the hero from the talk about journeying with Lefille?

“As I thought, you are the spitting image of the one in the oracle. Won’t you tell me your name?”

“I, I’m called Lefille Grakis...”

“Lefille Grakis. Alright Lefille-chan, nice to meetcha.”

With a smiling face, Elliot held a white hand out to Lefille. Was his expression one of affection? Or at this rate...

“Then, let’s do as in the oracle. Come with us.”

“Th, that’s...”

Elliot’s words and actions were as if this was only a natural course of action, while Lefille was bewildered. Of course, the one who butted into the conversation was Suimei, who was off to the side.

“Do you have a second?”

“You are?”

“I’m her companion, Suimei Yakagi. You guys just randomly came in and introduced yourselves but... are you really heroes?”

In response to that question, Christa seemed to become irritated. Just as she was about to complain about his suspicion, Elliot cut her off with his hand and spoke instead.

“That suspicion is only natural. It’s quite likely that other people have claimed to be heroes before. But we’re the real deal. Christa and the others at the Twilight Pavilion will confirm it.”

“The people here too?”

“Just a little ago we went out on a demon beast subjugation. I think that they know of my true power.”

His words stunk of self confidence, but when he looked around the surroundings, several people nodded their heads. Then the little commotion earlier was because some of the people around here knew him. If a hero went around talking without any hesitation, it would of course become a topic of

gossip.

But, the thing was, what was the meaning of the weird off feeling he was getting from hearing various languages? He was familiar with most languages in the other world, so even if they were magically translated for him, if he paid attention he should be able to pick out the particularities of the language. But the fact that he couldn't meant that this guy wasn't a person from the other world. Considering that, as for being a hero...

At that moment, Lefille spoke with a hard to interpret face.

"...Suimei-kun, his characteristics match with those in the oracle. I'm certain that he's the El Meide hero."

"Yes. There is no doubt that he is the hero summoned in El Meide."

Christa clearly declared that. Then, Elliot closed one eye and put his hand to his chest as he asked a question.

"So? I think this confirms it right?"

"That you're a hero at least."

"Then..."

"I also heard such from her but, whether or not you can take her along with you is a different matter."

"Huh?"

"Rather, do you have to take her along? Are the goddess's oracles absolute?"

Suimei presented a question. In this world it was likely more or less a strange question, but it was something he had to ask.

Christa was the one who replied.

"Of course. It is the goddess's intention. Us humans who have the pleasure to partake in it have a duty to grant her wish."

Among the living people, quite a few people have received the goddess's will through methods like direct oracles or from the elements. Lefille was an existence who had received something like the right arm and blood of the goddess so,

However, despite that,

“The goddess herself is unlikable.”

“Regardless of that.”

Is what Elliot fired back. For him to be from another world without being influenced by an outside factor yet go this far to respect Alshuna’s wishes — there must be a reason for him to not question the oracle, right? But despite that, even if you look at Lefille how she is right now, to be able to say that felt strange.

Based on that, Suimei asked a question.

“You’re going to defeat the Demon King and the like, right? Are you going to take along someone like her that can’t fight?”

“Well it’s true that I too feel kind of uncomfortable about that.”

That’s right. If he was right in the mind he would respond like that.

“Then...”

“However, the fact that there was such an oracle that I must bring her along means that she will be needed for something right?”

“I think you’re reading into it a little too much.”

“But the one who bestowed such an oracle is a being unimaginable by humans. To me, if there is something unfathomable, then just seeing it is fine.”

“The god... isn’t it a bit fishy? It could just be simply on a whim.”

“There is no way. Actually, I was saved by the goddess’s oracle.”

“Even if you say that with those gestures, it’s not connected to your beliefs in the goddess.”

When Suimei reproached him for his words and gestures, this time Christa spoke up.

“From what I’m hearing...”

“Hmm...?”

“From what I’m hearing, you’re saying nothing but denials of the oracle but,

are you saying that that you are defying not only Hero Elliot-sama's intentions, but also the goddess Alshuna's?"

"That, that's..."

Christa glared at him with a sharp gaze. To this Lefille panicked a little. Normally she wouldn't be the slightest bit worried if a girl glared at her, but when combining it with the fact that Alshuna was involved, her being worried was a given.

At that point, Felmenia conveniently intervened, challenging with Christa with an attitude uncharacteristic of her.

"It's true that the goddess Alshuna's words are important, but aren't you disregarding our circumstances too much? Suddenly taking off with Lefille, isn't that a bit impatient?"

"Anyone would know that this isn't the time to be so easygoing. Noshias has already fallen to the mazoku, and they have already begun their invasion of the Astel Kingdom."

"That was repelled."

"That's just 20/20 hindsight. The mazoku issue is a current issue."

"But even if Lefille joins the hero-dono, the situation may change. There is a good chance that this may leak out to unrelated people, and then wouldn't that give you a bad reputation?"

As Felmenia and Christa met each other's gazes, sparks flew out. For a second, it looked like Felmenia was the underdog, but in a splendid counterattack, she shut up Christa.

During that time, Elliot was staring at Felmenia, and eventually she noticed.

"...Is there something wrong?"

"I want to hear your name."

"...I am Fem Lea."

In the instant she was asked for her name, she spat out a fake name. As she said so, he looked at her with eyes of hidden intentions.

“Fem, it seems that you have quite considerable magic power.”

“Uh, eh?”

“Right now we are looking for combat strength on our way to subjugate the demon lord. In other words, we’re looking for useful people like you. Won’t both you and Lefille come with us?”

“Wha?!?”

“Ehhhhhhh?!?”

“Or rather, instead of asking you to come, it might be better to say that I order you to come. The power to draft people to come as companions should be within my authority as hero.”

As he said that, Elliot glanced over at Christa.

“...Yes, it is as you say.”

Was the bit of hesitation he had before getting her affirmation because of her? If she opposed it and then he immediately invited them to join him, then certainly he would be hesitant, but currently Elliot continued without any concern.

“So then, is that fine?”

“Even, even if you say that...”

Before Felmenia faltered too much, Suimei cut in.

“No matter what you say, aren’t you forcing us?”

“Maybe so.”

Was he dodging the question? He gazed at Suimei ill-manneredly, as if sizing him up.

“What?”

“She seems strong, but you don’t look like you’d be able to handle our journey.”

“Huh?”

“In other words, I can’t take you along. It is unfortunate, but give up. It may

seem like to you that we're stealing the two girls from you, but to this world's people this is a serious matter. For the people of this world, swallow your tears."

Suimei's mouth stiffened. If he was insulted in that manner, even he couldn't keep up his act. Even though it was their first meeting, the man had no restraint; it was quite the spectacle.

"So how about it?"

"For the people of this world. Isn't that just self-indulgence?"

"Self-indulgence... from the context, I imagine you mean that I'm trying to escape responsibility and criticism?"

As Elliot said that, Suimei responded with "Isn't that the precisely the reason why you said it?" At that moment, Felmenia suddenly begged Suimei.

"Suimei-donoo...! What do we doo...?!"

Felmenia looked extremely bewildered. Where did the cool Felmenia when she was arguing with Christa go to?

With that Suimei scowled at Elliot and spoke.

"...Can't you just listen to Menia for a bit?"

"Even if you say that, I can't! As I said earlier, to save the world she must come with me."

Pulling Felmenia close, Suimei whispered to her.

"Then, the king's orders..."

"No. If I give him my real name, then the Holy Office will probably issue a directive to the Royal Diet. If that happens then even the king can't do anything."

It wouldn't have any effect. Speaking of that, he'd heard that previously the diet had forced their way concerning the hero summoning. If he thought about that, then there's no way they would give preference to the King's will or life.

But regardless, Suimei turned to face Elliot.

"I refuse."

“It has nothing to do with you. You have no right to say such things.”

“They’re with me. So if I refuse...”

“As I said earlier, it’s for this world.”

As Elliot reiterated what he said earlier, Suimei annoyedly responded.

“I don’t give a shit about that.”

“Suimei-kun!”

“Suimei-dono!”

It wasn’t something that was good to say in public but he couldn’t not say it. To Suimei’s words, Lefille and Felmenia raised their voice, and Elliot also was fairly surprised.

“...Don’t you also live in this world?”

“Maybe. But to me, it doesn’t matter.”

“You...”

To Elliot’s bewildered gaze, Suimei returned a steely determined look. For a little it continued like that, but then someone broke the silence.

It was Christa.

“I heard your words! This man here is opposing the awe-inspiring words of the goddess. He’s defying her!”

As she said that, Felmenia and Lefille’s chairs made a rattle.

Having turned her back on Suimei and the others, Christa gave a movie-like speech from the corner of the Twilight Pavilion to everyone else in the room. With her exaggerated speech, was she trying to isolate them from everyone else?

Suddenly, everyone began to react to Christa’s act. They had been quietly discussing up until now. The related Twilight Pavilion people who came over now showed interest in their discussion while coming to submit their requests. In addition, the Salvation Church believers threw blaming gazes at them.

After a little while, the changed atmosphere set off something, and accusing

voices sounded out as people murmured, “what a shameless person,” and “what a rude person.”

Being a selfish person himself, Suimei was in no place to say anything. However, the changed surroundings due to the large amount of believers saying insults against him turned his stomach.

“...Goddess goddess. Considering I know nothing about her, her intentions seem like trash to me.”

“That’s not it. However, it’s a problem for the perspective of those who can’t tell it’s not that from this talk.”

But even so.

“You’re like an idiot.”

“What...?”

Since Suimei spoke in a roundabout way, Elliot became confused for a moment. Giving him a sidelong glance, Suimei then turned to Felmenia and Lefille. They probably would be having complicated thoughts right now. Since the goddess’s thoughts and their intentions were conflicting, the two of them had wavering expressions.

“Look at them. Up until now they were living freely, and now look at their faces. Wouldn’t you agree it’s a useless goddess?”

“Are you still saying that...?”

“I said it, so what? If you still want to take them by force, then why don’t you just try?”

In response to Suimei’s dangerous sounding words, “What did he say to the hero?” “Does he think he can win against the hero?” and “How foolish” were heard in the room. It seemed that Elliot and his group also thought the same.

“...You, you’re saying that to me, a hero?”

“Yeah.”

In response to that question, Suimei made apparent his determination. That he wouldn’t budge. But even seeing his attitude, it didn’t seem that Elliot

changed his mind. Instead, he turned towards Lefille to try to persuade her.

“You understand the gravity of the goddess Alshuna’s intentions right?”

“I, I, that...”

Lefille kept silent before finally nodding. Having received the goddess’s blessing, she could do nothing but nod.

“It seems she understands.”

“So it seems. But even still.”

Yes. He had promised. He didn’t know why, but he couldn’t expose them to those detestable eyes of Elliot. The same went for Felmenia.

To the repeated refusals of the three of them, Elliot let out a sigh as if he gave up and looked towards them with burning eyes.

“...I understand. Then I will forcibly take them.”

It seemed he decided. Following him, Christa once again made an outcry, declaring their own righteousness.

“Did you hear that! The people here, they just declared they would oppose the goddess!”

Meeting Christa’s voice, attacking voices gathered from the surroundings. This time the voices were not only loud, but there were also many. There were a few looking at Felmenia with bitter faces, but the gazes at Lefille were weak. Their faces were blue as if they were standing on a bed of nails.

“...Every last one of them.”

To the voices raining down on him, Suimei met them with an equally accusatory voice, ignoring their individual circumstances. Being unable to see the truth and only being thankful to what they can’t see. They only followed the goddess and what they saw around them, not thinking for themselves and attacking the weak.

“...Suimei-kun. Maybe we should give up after all...”

Suimei gently patted Lefille on the head, who had spoken in a timid voice.

“Suimei-dono...”

What to do. Felmenia looked over with a questioning gaze.

Then, she looked over at the hero.

After the hero tried to explain that they had an oracle so many times, it seemed now they could only resort to violence. Did he understand the pain in Lefille's face, or the desire to cooperate that Felmenia had. Was it right to ignore that? Right now Christa was still fanning the flames. The hero Elliot made distance for the showdown, and the surrounding people stood in a circle as if making an arena.

The meaning of acquiring strength. As Suimei remembered that, all the restraint that he had was blown away.

"Alright then. Come. I don't know anything about heroes, but you're standing in my way. I will force you aside."

"I believe I told you. You don't have to power to stand up to us. There is no reason for you to face us."

"..."

"Even if I look like this, in my world I was still a reasonable swordsman and magician. After coming to this world, I received the divine protection from the hero summoning ritual. You do understand what that means correct?"

"Who knows. I don't know anything about that."

"Doesn't seem like you're the type that can be reasoned with."

In response to Elliot's declaration, Suimei began to release his own power, filling the air with bloodthirst. The intense icy pressure affected the temperature of the room, dropping to freezing instantly. As a result of the temperature, the air could no longer hold as much water and condensation began to form on the walls and objects.

Naturally, aside from Suimei and the others, the faces of the rest of the people in the room completely changed color. The breaths of every person were white. As a result of Suimei's psychic cold, even time froze. The fingertips, feet, and ankles of everyone froze, and nobody could move even if they wanted to. It was as if everything had frozen over and hardened.

“So what do you think over my power now?”

“You...”

Sweat formed on Elliot’s brow, but he continued to show a strong will. It seemed his name being known in the other world wasn’t just for show. Normally, Suimei would give a word of praise, but right now there was none. He only coolly advanced towards his enemy. That was it.

Elliot took out his sword from his back. It was unlike the broad one that Reiji had. It was a moderately long blade about the length of a kohaba (Some measuring cloth used in textiles, <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%E5%B0%8F%E5%B9%85>). Through magic, the black blade began to glow as if burning red. The material properties most definitely matched Orichalcus, which possessed the ability to glow. The properties fit that material but in a different world it might be recognized as something else. However, currently that idle talk was irrelevant. The hero intended to step forward as the front lines. Due to Psychic Cold, he shouldn’t be able to move normally, but divine protection of the hero summoning was interfering with that.

“Elliot-sama...thunder, the embodiment of radiance and power, become sharp as our will and destroy what’s ahead! Blitzshoot!”

Thinking to provide cover first, Christa urgently cast thunder magic. With a bzzt, the lightning began to spring forth, tinted purple at the edges.

However,

“Disappear”

With a single word from Suimei, the magic vanished by a mysterious force. Noticing that her own magic had been utterly destroyed, Christa sank to her knees as she realized the difference in strength.

In the middle of that, Elliot came with a slash. No, a thrust. Perhaps it was because of the hero summoning blessing along with his own previous skill, but his one handed stab was as powerful as a sudden gale. It reached it’s maximum speed in an instant, but in speed or dexterity Kuchiba Hatsumi was more than a whole level above him. In the instant before the tip of the sword reached him,

Christa, who got up from the floor, suspiciously threw out another question.

“A new oracle, what do you mean by that? Or more importantly, does it have anything to do with us?”

“Yes, to the hero, and also to the other party there. Just a little ago, the goddess bestowed a new oracle to me.”

“To me, and him?”

“Yes. It was that you guys cannot directly fight over the red haired girl there. Due to the shadow in the imperial capital causing a disturbance, settle this dispute, is pretty much what it was about.”

Due to the unexpected intercession, the room became noisy. Nobody expected that on top of the first oracle, there would be another one.

Next, Suimei asked the sister a question.

“Sister, what do you mean by the shadow causing a commotion?”

“Probably the criminal causing the coma incidents. In other words that to catch the criminal we should...”

“In other words, that we should fight there.”

“Yes, so please end it. Fighting in this kind of place, isn't it useless?”

As the sister explained how there was no use, Elliot quietly acquiesced and put away his sword.

“... I understand. If it is the oracle then I will withdraw my sword.”

Seeing that, Suimei also extinguished his magic. If he fought in this kind of place for no reason, then it would be bad for the others.

Having put away his sword, Elliot faced Suimei.

“And that is how it seems. What are you going to do?”

“Hmm. I have no duty to listen to Alshuna. But if we can settle this dispute through that battle then I'll come along.”

“I can't stand how you talk but... it's decided.”

Declaring that they had made an agreement, Elliot then looked down to

Christa.

“Elliot-sama...”

Walking behind Christa who was looking at him with an uneasy face, Elliot then turned back around to face Suimei.

“It was Suimei Yakagi right? Your name.”

“Yeah.”

“I will remember that. Now then, let’s go Christa.”

Saying that, Elliot walked into the crowd and left the guild.

“It’s been a while.”

“I didn’t think at all that a sister would interfere.”

“Me neither. Since I didn’t expect that after coming to the Twilight Pavilion the gentleman I talked to earlier would be at odds with the hero.”

It was certainly unexpected. Knowing it was the hero who would save the world and still getting ready to fight...

At that point, Suimei noticed something strange about the sister’s speech and behavior. She said that she had a task which is why she visited the Twilight Pavilion. From the way the conversation was going right now, she didn’t even mention that there was an oracle. In that case,

“Sister... about that oracle earlier.”

“The oracle right now? Currently...”

“...?”

The sister brought her face closer bit by bit. She laughed slightly and said “It seems that was a lie,” before distancing herself again.

“Wha...really??”

“I mean, if I didn’t do something like that, then you’d trash the hero’s reputation... ahem! Because it would be very unfortunate.”

Saying that, the sister giggled. Based on her figure, it didn’t seem like her goal was to protect the hero at all.

“Who knows, maybe I would have lost?”

“Ara, am I just blind?”

“No, your eyes seem perfectly fine.”

Who knew the result of the battle but, it seemed only the sister was able to predict it. Maybe it was because she was a beastman. Concerning that,

“Well even if so, is it okay for you to lie about the oracle? Aren’t you part of the Salvation Church?”

“Yes.”

“Then,”



As Suimei said that, Clarissa shook her head side to side.

“From my place serving Alshuna-sama, it is unworthy, but what the goddess says is not always correct. And considering that, when I saw you standing against the hero to protect what you held dear, I thought it was quite splendid.”

“Eh...”

While Suimei was bewildered due to her unexpected words, Clarissa gently wrapped her hand around his.

“You have a good heart. Make sure that you don’t ever forget that.”

Saying that, the sister turned heel and left.



Due to Clarissa’s intervention that led to an agreement with Elliot, Suimei’s party left as if running from the Twilight Pavilion, moving to a place to calm themselves down about as far as the house was.

Felmenia made a difficult face.

“Haa... it ended up becoming an unbelievable matter.”

Certainly competing to see who can catch the criminal first was an unforeseen situation. Regardless of Clarissa’s cleverness in the moment, it was still unexpected to be rolled up into this.

“... Sorry. Because of my oracle, it even got Felmenia involved.”

“N, no, Lefille doesn’t need to worry! Regardless of how it started, if we just win it will be fine! Right, Suimei-dono?!”

Felmenia, who had realized she had said something rude, brought up the matter to Suimei, but Suimei crossed his arms and didn’t respond. He only stared a hole into the ground. Thinking that his behavior was strange, the uneasy Felmenia once again tried to bring up the question.

“Suimei-dono?”

“...Ahh. That’s right. As for what we should do about the coma incident perpetrator, for now let’s just wait and see what happens.”

As reflected in how he spoke, for some reason Suimei had a feeling that even

if he won the match, it would only postpone the problem. Because the competition was a result of Clarissa's lie, it was very much possible the goddess would just send another oracle about Lefille. Winning wouldn't solve the fundamental issue. In addition to it being related to religion, it also could not be solved by ordinary methods.

That was what Suimei was thinking. As he was absorbed in his thoughts, Lefille uneasily pulled on his sleeve.

"Suimei-kun. What's wrong?"

"Oh, just thinking about the future. What we should do from now and such."

"Shouldn't we gather some information after all?"

Suimei agreed with Felmenia's proposal.

"I guess so. Menia can you do me a favor?"

"Leave it to me! I came here to be useful to Suimei so no matter what you ask... Though there aren't very many people who will cooperate in getting information."

"That can't be helped. He's a hero after all."

The people of the imperial capital likely wouldn't be very cooperative. Between the hero and the idiot opposing him, who they would choose to cooperate with is obvious.

While it might not be to the extent of actively trying to interfere with them, they definitely wouldn't just happily cooperate. In that respect, Suimei was at a big disadvantage, but there was nothing that could be done about that.

As Suimei continued to think in that train of thought, Lefille raised her hand.

"Then, I will also help in gathering information."

"No, there's something else I want to ask of Lefille."

"Something else... is it to search for the criminal?"

"No no, I couldn't ask Lefille to do something like that right now."

Suimei shook his head. He couldn't let the current little Lefille do something unreasonable like that.

“Then?”

“I want you to go around the Imperial capital and gather stray cats, bringing them back here.”

“C, cats? Why do we need cats?”

“Well, if we can’t get the cooperation of people, then let’s get the help of cats is what I thought.”

As Suimei said that, he began to explain the details.



Having their assignments, Suimei and the others split up. Unlike Elliot and the others, they had no clues and had quite a late start.

Suimei headed off to the place where he had seen the suspicious man previously.

He returned to the library Liliana had shown him to before, where the black hooded man had created a mock barrier using magic and chased the noble around inside it. Suimei guessed that that man was the criminal responsible for the incidents.

“That reminds me, he was quite small.”

The man he confronted in the darkness was quite short and slender. Even if he recalled his movements, he seemed to be a quite young person—he wouldn’t be surprised if it was a child. Based on that, complicated feelings welled up.

(What could it be...)

Inflicting comas on the citizens and causing fear as well as being a pain for the military police. A child. It was as if he couldn’t see a motive.

As he paced in circles thinking about it, in front of him he saw a black crowd of people forming.

“What...”

It was extremely noisy and gradually getting even louder. Suimei also began to gain interest in what was going on in the busy road, and nimbly got closer. As

he did, suddenly a magic power began to swell out of the circle of people gathered around it.

“...This is”

Suimei remembered this feeling. It was of the same wavelength of that of the other day. The growing presence of the magic of Liliana Zandike.

Suddenly, from behind he heard fragments of conversations, “What’s wrong,” “The human weapons is,” “that’s the guild magician.” One of them was the nickname of Liliana Zandike.

While apologizing, Suimei pushed aside the crowd as he got closer. When he got to the front of the crowd, as he thought he saw Liliana’s figure.

He could see her cold left eye. The one it looked down at was the guild magician who had quarreled with Liliana.

Unlike the time earlier, Liliana must have used her magic, since his robe was in flames and cut up. He was in a pitiful state.

Most likely it was the result of fire and wind magic that passed his defenses. It seemed he was also just about out of magic.

“I hope, from this, you learn to stop messing with me.”

“Shit...”

The one who swore was the rude mouthed man, who was trying to get up. He was still glaring at Liliana with animosity, but Liliana would not tolerate it. Once again, the density of magic began to thicken along with killing intent and combat strength in a 10 meter radius to the extent that anyone would know the ill intent she had towards the man.

To the curious onlookers as well, this was a hair raising situation. The poisonous magic power that crept into everyone’s skin was a given considering the negative emotions filling the air due to Liliana.

In the end, both the rough and smooth talking men lost their wills as they frothed at the mouth. They had no magic left and couldn’t even get up right now. Giving them a glance, Liliana returned her magic power to normal, having solved the issue at hand.

From that direction, Suimei felt a sharp gaze from somewhere in the surroundings.

Having completely dominated them, she caused great fear, in response to which fear and disgust swirled around in the surroundings.

Most likely, this time as well they were the perpetrators, and she hadn't done anything wrong. Receiving such harsh treatment despite it being self defense, it was somewhat pitiable.

As if to provide a lifeline, Suimei stepped out.

“Yo.”

Having noticed his voice, Lilia turned around and faced him.

“...You again? You seem to always appear near me.”

“Same here. Could be said that one of us is following the other. So...”

With that, he looked over in pity at the two ragged men.

“Did they charge at you again?”

“Yes. Not learning, they challenged me again. Despite being adults, they can't be helped. Huge idiots.”

“...You're also a disaster.”

Her gaze that was directed at Suimei also had an amazed look in it. If the people around knew this, then maybe the atmosphere might calm down somewhat. Is what he thought, but it didn't go as he expected, and the surrounding people's gazes didn't change.

The people around should have been here earlier than him, yet why were they saying severe things like “the human weapon gave the guild magician a good beating,” “what an ominous child,” and “why are we leaving this dangerous kid alone.” It was strange. Normally, if it was clear who was in the right, nobody would be saying such things. Which means that they should be blaming the men who had attacked a little child first. So why was she being treated as the aggressor? Or was this just how the people of the imperial capital saw Lilia.

While Suimei was dumbfounded at the surrounding ill will, Liliana began to move.

“Move. I’m not, for show.”

Liliana glared at the crowd. Not wanting to meet her eyes, the surrounding put on stiff indecipherable expressions and began to slowly disperse. As they began to leave,

“...Monster.”

Someone murmured those words.

“...Oi.”

“It would be nice if you just shut up since we’ll be gone in a bit...”

“Be gone... that’s not what this is about. I hope you’re not misunderstanding the circumstances.”

“It’s fine.”

While looking down, her tone was strong but without heart. Her words as well were carelessly said with a mix of resignation.

“...Is this fine?”

“Yes, just as always. We all despise you and your ghastly magic. In the empire, I—no, anywhere I go they always say that.”

In her murmurs there was a hint of loneliness. It was like the voice of someone who had given up, not caring either way what happens.

“The post I occupy is special. In the first place, it’s an easy to hate position, so if I’m there then all the better.”

Certainly, the army would have special positions, and there would also be some within those that are loathed by others. They would invite dissatisfaction, but if there was a target particularly easy to attack, whether it be by fate, then everyone would focus on that target while ignoring the others. Then, was Liliana the one who received all of that ill will?

As Suimei looked around, he saw everyone cautiously looking at her while backing away as if there was some untouchable beast there.

One person was hiding in a store. Another one was hiding behind a store while glaring at them. All of their gazes were filled with dark contempt. Not the eyes one would have towards a child.

Eventually, they all left. Liliana, who had endured it all, also tried to leave but,

“Wait a bit.”

“What?”

“You’re injured.”

He didn’t know whether Liliana had taken a hit from the men’s magic, but the back of her neck was slightly red. It was probably something like a burn. Suimei quickly drew close while holding out his hand to the affected area.

“What are you...”

“Just hold still.”

From his hand a pale phosphorescent light began to emanate. Healing magic. The inflamed skin soon returned back to it’s original state.

As if touching something strange, Liliana gently felt the back of her neck.

Then,

“...Why?”

“Hmm?”

“Why are you, so nice, to me?”

“It was merely my own curiosity meddling but, is it bothering you?”

“Yes. Very much.”

Liliana’s affirmation revealed an emotion like anger. Seeing that face, an emotion like pity began to well up.

“If only you, just did the same as them.”

“Despise you like they did?”

“Yes.”

“Is that what you really want?”

“That’s...”

“It’s not. Right?”

“...”

Liliana hung her head and remained silent. The strength in her shoulder had been drawn out.

“...Can you return alone?”

“D, don’t treat me like a child!”

“I see. Well I have my own things to do, so I’ll be going.”

Saying that, Suimei turned to the place where he met the suspicious man.

...Do as you like.

From behind, he thought he heard a mutter.



“I’m back.”

Having searched the area with no results, Suimei returned home. Because he was in deep thought he took off his shoes haphazardly and nearly stepped on them before fixing them. Looking into the entrance of the house, he saw Lefille waiting under a soft orange lamp.

“Welcome back.”

“Lefi, you got back first huh. So why are you standing there?”

“Waiting for you to come back.”

“Me?”

To his question, Lefille nodded and then pointed towards the bath.

Understanding, Suimei nodded with an “ahh.” She wanted him to prepare the bath right.

The water service in the capital was still under maintenance and although it would be available for use soon, magic could also be used to make hot water. To do that, families either did it themselves or called an expert to do it. Of course, for Suimei’s group they had two people who excelled in magic, and it

was primarily Suimei's job to heat water for the bath.

"Though, was it really worth waiting for me?"

"Ah, well I got covered in cat hair."

"That sucks."

Suimei watched as the disaster of a Lefille approached. On her clothes and skin, as well as her hair as illuminated through the orange light, cat hair was everywhere. Was she fighting with the cats or something? With her arms crossed, her figure looked shabby.

"Is that it?"

"Hmm? Is there something else?"

Should he have also said his thanks? Suimei could only think of that. Meanwhile, Lefille began to pout.

"Mumumu. How useless of a person...should I cover you in hair too?"

"I'm fine your highness. I'm going to go shut myself in the research room and cook up ideas for all kinds of magic items as well as look at that book Menia gave..."

"Don't hold anything back. Aren't we comrades? Come, why don't we share everything with each other?"

"Wait, calm down."

Is what Suimei said, but Lefille excitedly continued.

"That's fresh, you being so hesitant. Quite interesting."

"Oi! Don't try to mess around with me!"

"Isn't it fine?"

With a wide smile and a "fufufu," Lefille celebrated. She looked like she was about to grab him and rub against him. At that moment, the entrance door opened.

"I'm back"

"Wel-welcome back my savior."

As he said that to Felmenia who had just come back from gathering information, he grabbed Lefille from behind him and pushed her in front before turning around nonchalantly towards the house.

“...What’s going on?”

Not understanding the situation, Felmenia had a blank look. Having done her all at gathering information, her skin was somewhat pale and one could easily see her exhaustion.

“Suimei-kun. It’s cowardly to use Miss Felmenia as a shield you know.”

“You say that while approaching me like that.”

“Ugh...”

From that exchange Felmenia guessed at the meaning of the current chain of events and then turned an accusatory gaze at Suimei.

“Suimei-dono...”

“Eh... it was a joke.”

Saying that, Suimei gave Felmenia a pat on both shoulders.

“Menia. Do you want to teach Lefille how to use the bath from now on? Earlier, since she didn’t know how to, she was waiting all this time.”

“Eh!?! Taking a bath? I don’t particularly... well...”

Felmenia said in an uncollected nervous voice.

“That’s right. It’s a good opportunity. Today I’ll teach you all about how nice baths are.”

“Ehh...”

Hearing Lefille’s excited voice, Felmenia faltered with a tearful voice.

In the Astel Kingdom there was no bathing culture so she seemed quite resistant to it, having obstinately refused up until now. She was one of those people who didn’t even consider that their opinion might change despite not having even tried it.

Felmenia then began to distance herself from Suimei and Lefille who were

blocking her way, slowly stepping backwards.

“Can’t we do this some other time? There will be plenty of chances.”

“You. You said the same thing before.”

“Miss Felmenia. You can’t use that excuse twice.”

After the two of them said that, Felmenia panicked. As if she was unable to think of any other excuses, her face became solemn.

“To tell the truth, one of the Stingray family pillars is that we don’t take baths so um...”

“Mu, is that really the case?”

Lefille chewed on that excuse as if actually considering it, but Suimei wouldn’t let it pass.

“That’s weak Menia. In my world we have magic to see through lies.”

“That’s unfair!! The magic in your world is a fraud!”

“So it seems it was a lie.”

“Ah...”

Although she would have been fine if she just stuck with her lie a little longer, she let out the truth.

“Miss Felmenia, it’s not good to know when to give up you know. Just give up and take a bath with me.”

“Then since you’ll be there, you do the honors of heating up the water too.”

“That...”

Caught between the two of them, Felmenia had nowhere to run. Confirming both the front and back gates, she dropped her shoulder resignedly and was pulled in by Lefille.

...After a while, Suimei was walking around nearby looking for a place to put the cats when he heard the rustling of clothes. It seemed that they had managed with the hot water and were now in the midst of their preparations.

“What!?!”

“...What’s wrong? Lefille.”

From the dressing room he heard a strange shout from Lefille and a strange sounding Felmenia. It seemed there was some kind of problem.

“Bi, big...”

“Hah?”

“Possibly bigger than those of my original form, these ones.”

What in the world could they be so shocked about? As if Felmenia understood,

“...? I don’t really get it, but are you talking about my chest?”

“That’s right. What did you eat and do to make them so big Miss Felmenia?”

“No, I don’t really think about them but.”

“Are you hiding it? For your own sake you can’t do that!”

“It’s fine. Lefille’s will grow big too in time.”

As Felmenia gently admonished Lefille, Lefille then shouted with a will to not lose.

“If, if I returned to my original form... they wouldn’t be to the extent of yours but...”

“Original form...? You kept saying that before, but what in the world do you mean?”

“To tell the truth, this small kid form isn’t my real form. In actuality, I’m both taller and older than you.”

“Uh, erm...”

Upon seeing the confused Felmenia, Lefille became somewhat angry.

“You don’t believe me! Do you!”

“Huh? No, I definitely do. I believe in what you said. With time you’ll surely become bigger you mean, right?”

“Isn’t that the same as not believing me at all?!?”

In the end, their conversation was limited to this topic of returning to her original form, with nobody believing the other. Saying “Umumu...” with a displeased voice, Lefille often puffed her cheeks up but....

“...Eavesdropping is unpleasant huh.”

Suimei had quickly become absorbed into their conversation and only now after quite a while did he realize how indecent it was. With that, he decided to leave the area. At that time,

“Miss Felmenia. Sorry but wait a bit.”

“What is it—hyau!?”

“Ugu, this elasticity is so devastating.”

“Wha, what in the world are you doing?! Don’t fondle me!”

“No, I’m just investigating a...huh?”

“What is it this time...hi!?”

“Miss Felmenia. There’s a little bit of flab on your lower back. Isn’t this bad?”

“E-even if you don’t say that, I know! S-so stop grabbing me!”

“Sorry. It was rude.”

Suimei heard the conversation of the two naked women.

“...two, three, five, seven, eleven.”

While reciting the prime numbers, Suimei quickly ran away with a red face.



In the middle of the darkness, there were two.

Their form melted into the surroundings, and with a glance one could never distinguish the robed tall and short shadows. They leapt through the sleeping town as if stitching together the darkness. Their skill left behind little trace, like a hunter.

Suddenly, the small shadow stopped. Stopping as if due to an invisible force, it silently came down to the laid out bricks from its curved trajectory.

“...What’s wrong?”

“No, it’s, nothing.”

The tall shadow had also come down shortly after. The answer to the question may or may have not been a lie. The reason why they had stopped was because they were doubting the living being atop the fence. Or perhaps, it was the other way around, and the other had an issue with this side.

It was sitting on a high place relative to the surroundings, pupils expanded to span its entire eyes, gazing at them intently with fiery eyes. A cat. It was a stray cat living in the Imperial capital but, due to its two yellow eyes it had caught their attention.

“Naaa.”

It made a sound. What meaning might it have? Standing up on its four soft looking legs, the cat left without a sound.

The tall shadow put its hands on the other’s shoulder.

“Let’s go.”

“...Yes.”

The short shadow quickly expressed its agreement, and once again moved, following the tall shadow. Of course, to accomplish whatever their objective was. The target this time was said to be passing nearby the upper class district. The information had come from the latter shadow. The tall shadow always came with dreadfully accurate information. Even now, they were carrying out their objective based on that. Probably, it had a better information network than the empire itself.

Earlier, because an unrelated party had interfered with their target, it had gotten away.

“Here. Set the trap.”

With words, the shadow nodded. As requested, the shadow deftly began to compile a spell, and just as it was about to begin the aria,

“Nyaa.”

“...?!?”

To the voice that had unexpectedly sounded, the shadow's back shivered in surprise. Turning around, it saw the cat sitting down. Without a sound it had crept up. It had gotten close on top of the wall, and like the previous cat was staring at them. Staring. It was as if it was closely monitoring them. Around its arm was a black cloth. A pet cat it seemed.

Stopping her magic momentarily, the shadow turned and took a step towards the cat. But the cat didn't seem to care. Its pupils filled its entire eyes as it continued to stare. Only after taking one or two more steps did the cat decide to get up and yawn before leaving.

(.....)

What in the world was it. The shadow didn't know what the cat was expecting, but gathering itself, began its shadow magic that weakened vision. With this, barring some a small chance or accident, the target would not be able to escape from the district.

With that the target soon appeared. It seemed he had drunk to his heart's content. His gait unsteady, he didn't even notice the dark shadowy region. This time it would be easy. Just a trivial job to use magic on the drunk. The other person also thinking this, cast magic onto the drunk man.

And then, the matter was soon concluded, and the despised noble fell over onto the brick path.

... With this another worrying end had been tied up. Only a few more times and there would be no more obstructions on the path that man walked.

Unconsciously letting out a breath and turning heel to return,

“As expected, always turning around late.”

That voice sounded out.



(Small shadow pov)

“ ... ”

Noticing the voice, I turned and saw a man. Age was in the teens. He was of medium build and height. With a glance he had a nice atmosphere, but by no

means was his appearance a good thing. With a delayed voice, the tall shadow faced that direction.

Why?

For him to come here, I was confused. Why was this man here right now?

We had met at the station and he had gotten lost in the city, Suimei Yakagi.

It was as if his objective was to come here. In that line of thinking, upon arriving, Suimei knitted his eyebrows as if his objective in coming here was to stop us. Like us he had appeared in the darkness. Behind him, a familiar small figure and a silver haired figure also appeared. It was an event outside of our plans and expectations. I didn't know the reason, but Suimei had definitely come to catch us. But having already finished our tasks, we had no business with Suimei and the others. It wouldn't be beneficial to remain in Suimei's sight for long.

"...Leave the consequences to me. Can you take one?"

"Yes."

In a word, I implied my agreement to what the tall shadow said about handling the consequences.

"Ah... wait!"

Noticing the shadow try to escape, the silver haired woman raised her voice and right after signaled to Suimei with her eyes. However, he gave a sidelong look at the tall shadow and saw him melting into the darkness and then gave an unnecessary glance at the passed out noble.

"It's fine. Don't chase for too long. I'll leave the old guy to you two."

"Ye, yes."

Acknowledging what he said, she then ran over to the downed man with the red haired companion.

"...So, the incident culprit is none other than you?"

"..."

"Staying silent is equivalent to admitting it you know."

I didn't have any intention of answering. The relationship between me and Suimei. Regardless of how I change my voice using magic, that fact remained the same. If it was a situation where hidden power was infused into language like in the middle of an aria, then it would be different, but right now I wouldn't do something foolish like that.

While I was thinking that, Suimei Yakagi began to raise his arm, making a movement to snap his fingers. It was the technique that had shattered the guild magician's cane. As for how, at the same time his fingers snap, wind-based explosion magic was produced that filled the atmosphere. It was simple but also a high class magic. The aria and activation words were also high class but, the time to construct and fire the magic was breathtakingly short, and taking into account the reality of fights it was quite a fearsome magic. His slow raising of his arm was just an act to scare the opponent but, since in reality it could be cast in its entirety under a second, if one didn't predict it they would have to rely solely on senses to resist or evade it.

Pachink.

"...tch."

Almost at the same time as I dodged horizontally, the area I was just in exploded. However, it was only in the area just above where Suimei's gaze and finger intersected. If I hadn't been watching and didn't notice, I would have been defeated. But right now was not the time to entertain other thoughts. Having already predicted that my posture would be destroyed, Suimei was already running. Fast. Even though he hadn't used any special enhancement magic, his speed was more than enough.

"Permutatio Coagulatio Viscane." (Solidification Alteration Skill)

As Suimei ran, the moment he muttered his Alma Mercurius spell, a fluid came out of a vial in his hand, changing into a two pronged wand. As the silver colored metal spun into form, the surrounding wind made whiplash-like sounds and the tip pointed towards me. There was no shadow of a doubt in his speed. Despite being a magician he was practised in fighting.

I then began to cast dark magic towards Suimei.

"Oh darkness. That that covers the sky like a curtain, come and grind, hit,

strike, and smash my enemy to the ground. And when he is at my feet, swallow him up and crush him with the shadows.”

It was a completely different darkness than that of night, and it covered the sky. The black curtain that rose up appeared as if it would completely crush everything under it to death. Just as it seemed it would stop the running Suimei, he leapt to the side, barely escaping. Just as he was about to writhe out of it, as if he was caught in the hand of a giant, he snapped back into it as if pulled in. In this middle of the hammer of darkness, he then somehow evaded it as if breaking the laws of nature, landing in a broken but safe stance. On his face was an expression of doubt and wonder.

“Oi, what’s this magic?”

Of course I didn’t reply to his demand, but instead the silver haired girl behind him gave away the nature of my magic.

“Suimei-dono! It’s dark magic! And it’s especially strong!”

“Dark, magic?”

It seemed that for some reason this was Suimei’s first time seeing dark magic. That was somewhat suspicious but I could only hear the confusion in Suimei’s voice. It seemed he wasn’t familiar with dark magic. In that case, it was my chance.

As I was thinking that, I saw his mouth begin to move.

“Et factus est invisibilis. Instarventi.” (Make my blade invisible and as sharp as steel and sink it into my enemy’s blood.)

At the same time as the magic formation took form at his feet, an earpiercing sound. It was different from the sound earlier caused by the metal wand. The sound that slipped into the dark sharpened the cold night like a sword. Soon it filled the senses and strengthened, causing a string to revolve around the surroundings. Then, I evaded. Not movements to evade a sword attack, but through agility to evade an arrow. Dodging it, the ground behind me was bisected. That repeated several times.

However, just as I was evading, Suimei’s mouth moved.

“Flamma. Est lego vis wizard.” (Fire, gather. Like the pent up resentment of a sorcerer.)

The spell was like nothing I had heard before. In that case, it was my turn as well.

“Darkness. Drive them all to madness. Tempt them into curiosity. Through the black snake guide them all to ruin. The thin darkness that leads to the hand of ruin.”

I cast a spell. This magic was a special type. An original using the darkness attribute. By utilizing the darkness attribute, it destabilized the opponent’s magic, resulting in it not having a definite form. Unstable magic could have many potential results including not firing, causing a different effect, or firing on the user himself. However, by adjusting the magic to result in a misfire against oneself, it could inflict serious injury.

Is how it should have been but,

“Resonatur! Illi qui flagitant Discordia et lost in ventum!” (Tuning! That which throws order into chaos, change and dissipate into the wind!)

Suimei interrupted my spell, interjecting with another chant.

“Harmonies! Aeolia!” (Tuning wind!)

Hahmohniasu Aioria. Certainly as those words were carried by the wind something changed.

“Wha...?!”

The instant the darkness in the form of a snake began to rise out of the magic formation, both the snake and the formation were smashed into particles of light. The confetti like grains of light illuminated the unarmed man behind them.

He was fine, which meant that he had perfectly resisted it. But, that’s impossible. All magic had the elements shoulder some of the burden of the casting. Therefore, all magic cast by magicians would have some portion that wasn’t actively processed by the caster, meaning that they could not completely control their magic. Because the magic I used took advantage of this

gap, for it to not exist, did that mean that he wasn't using the elements? If I take that to be the case right now, then that meant he completely and precisely controlled his magic—in other words his magic did not use the elements as a medium at all.

While I was bewildered in my own thoughts, as if shaking off the remaining magic power, Suimei brushed off his empty right hand.

“...Phenomenon Mixer.”

“...?”

“The magic law of what you just used. Although you didn't do it perfectly... jeez, despite not knowing the magic basics, you did it quite well.”

As if spitting it out, that kind of abusive language was characteristic of his praise.

Next, a cold atmosphere filled the surroundings. He completely considered me as an enemy it seemed. His pressure was even more coercive due to his sharp gaze. I had also thought such when defeating the guild magicians, but Suimei Yakagi is a worthy magician. Using high level magic, he had shortly gained control and stolen their magic. His true skill was more than comparable to the Yuuketsu. It wasn't even impossible that he was more than that.

“Primum, ex Secandum, excipio.” (First and second bulwark expand.)

“...?!”

Golden magic formations rose up. It was as if they were shields to protect him.

Suimei Yakagi began to move. At first he walked comfortably towards me, but possibly reading my intentions, he accelerated at an impossible speed, closing the distance.

Close quarters combat was not really my forte. Rapidly casting a spell. Just as he was about to snap his fingers, he rapidly dodged as if sensing something.

His reflexes were fast. For him to so rapidly decide to dodge despite being in the middle of casting a spell, did he sense something? His reactions were already on the level of foresight.

In the time I was thinking that, I could see in his eyes that he had already come up with a counterplan.

Another spell formation rose up into the air. Except one, no, not that type.

Doublecast. No, this was...

“Ad vigniti. Transcription, invocatio! Augoeides!” (Brightness magic technique. Transcription until number 20. Invoke!)

“Kuh”

A light yet not light-type spear came attacking. Putting a lot of magic power into the technique; he changed his means of attack? And to prepare and fire several of those at the same time, was he a monster? I barely managed to dodge the rain of light from the side. Dodging it, I had to counter attack. I had to defeat anything that stood in my way. For that person. That’s why I don’t care what happens to me. Even if it was excessively dangerous to myself, I took my chance between the splinters of brick that whirled like dust and ran at him. However, as for what was in front of me, at some point Suimei’s metal wand had changed to a sword, and he now stood there with it.

Like that, I hit the middle of his sword with the tip of my wand. Because I was always watching that man, I had my own confidence. In the empire there was no one who had bested that man in swordplay. However, Suimei Yakagi’s swordsmanship was a separate matter. He repelled my attack with unexpected control, his sword making a fluid arc. With two vigorous strikes, the sharpened tip of his sword began to shine while making a revolution in the air, tracing an arc.

Magic formation. The light of the magic power that came forth was red. Blaze magic.

When I noticed, the magic formation was already completed, and the sharpness of the sword pointed at me reflected off my eyes. Barely realizing that he was aiming at my shoulder, I managed to dodge the stab but his magic was another matter. In these circumstances, there was no way to defend. What should I do? I could feel the heat from the magic formation. Fire-type magic. The light magic hindered the dark, a strong attribute.

“Tch!”

Fearing the pain and heat, I clenched my teeth and threw myself to the ground. In that vigorous moment, I rolled on the ground. My current status—the blaze had only licked my robe, and was largely uninjured. I was saved by the fact that it was an instant cast magic so the intensity was far lower than earlier, combined with the fact that my small body could make quick movements.

The silver haired girl then called out to Suimei Yakagi.

“A barrier...”

“It’s fine. More importantly, I leave Lefille and that old guy to you. Be careful of any changes in the surrounding magic power and environment. Making sure you don’t stand out, expand your own perception.”

“This is...”

The silver haired girl looked around the surroundings. Shortly, after a blink her eyes widened. What she had surely noticed was a black different than that of the darkness which had befallen the night.

Did Suimei Yakagi notice that? A black haze hidden by the night. As expected of him. I was trying to sink him into the darkness before he knew, but for him to notice that as well. But even for him who could steal the magic of others, there was no way to interfere with magic he didn’t know of right? The unblemished moon was dyed by the haze produced through darkness magic; it could be mistaken as a black pearl at this point. Just as the girl noticed the change in the surroundings and nodded to Suimei, I began to cast my dark magic.

“Darkness. Creep out of the body of the hidden chaos. To show your power. I don’t seek retribution. I have no anger. Therefore...”

What I then added onto the chant was the forbidden words that strengthened dark magic.

“Algo, Lucula, Radia, Secunto, Labielaru, Beibaron... hatred left only to the dark anger retaliacio.”

“Primum Quartum, Excipio!” (All area defense from the first to fourth)

Suimei Yakagi expanded the layers of the golden hemispherical barrier from

earlier. The light and dark collided. The revolving barrier formation made a shrill noise and rays of light scattered out, defending against many of the bands of dark.

“Gu...”

Suimei leaked out a small but painful grunt. The darkness that slowly penetrated through the golden barrier accumulated at his left arm. Threatening his safety, a bead of sweat appeared on his nose. A success. It was the first time my attack had gotten through.

However, Suimei didn't fall even after a little while. Even though he had received my dark magic that should send out shots of severe pain that spread out like insects, leaving any enemy in despair as they tire, screaming with a contorted face in anguish. Suimei Yakagi merely stood on both feet, staring at me.

“You...”

Did I make him speak out his hatred for me? However, what followed was,

“Are you really pulling the strings like that...?”

His question was mixed with doubt and anger, without any strain.

Is he really asking that at this point? I am a dark magician. To obstruct him I became this person who command this magic that eats into my body like maggots. Obviously. To me, doing such a thing is only a matter of course. Yes, everything is to protect that person...

... To protect, will I take on his injuries?

“...!?”

There, I noticed. My boundary that cannot be crossed.

Who is this? This man is not the one threatening that person, right? Why did he say that and continue to deal with the current matter? Suimei Yakagi. The man that won't get scared no matter how much I coerce him or show him my ghastly side. With a kind voice, the man who thinks of the isolated me. Was I really using my dark magic that could easily steal the lives of humans against him?

“Oi, wait!”

What he had noticed was that I broke off running in another direction away from here.

(POV end)



Was it unexpected that Suimei had taken a hit? As the short shadow was fleeing into the shadows, Lefille and Felmenia were running towards Suimei.

“Suimei-dono!”

“Suimei-kun!

“.....”

Even though they were looking at him, Suimei continued to stare at his left arm, which had the haze coiling and moving about it. Then, Felmenia spoke up.

“A-are you okay? I saw that you took her dark magic earlier.”

“Ah, I did. It penetrated the fortress magic.”

Saying that, since the magic was persisting, he thrust his left arm out to show Felmenia. His hand and the wrist had nothing unusual, but the parts that were affected by the haze that penetrated the fortress were turning black and wrinkling as if drying up.

“Th-this is?”

“She got me. Even within the Astral Attacks, it was probably quite the strong attack. It has effects not only on the soul but also the body as well.

As he said that, he made a grim face, while Lefille stood on her tiptoes and took a peek at it.

“Are you okay?”

“If I leave it as it is, it’ll corrode and rot.”

“Wh-what did you say?!”

“Is-is-is-is this not a huge problem?!?!?! Q-quick! Recovery magic! In the first place isn’t this something that warrants recovery magic?! What do we do what

do we do what do we do?!?”

In response to Suimei’s words that were as if he were talking about another person, Lefille raised a surprised shout while Felmenia panicked, running confusedly back and forth. Running around panicking, one might ask who was the one who had been injured.

“Oi oi calm down Menia.”

“You think I can calm down?! How are you managing to be so calm?!?”

“That’s right Suimei-kun! Necrosis is no simple thing!”

“It’s fine. I mean the Astral Body was damaged so even if you use recovery magic it won’t go back to normal immediately anyway.”

“Really?”

As Lefille asked for confirmation, Felmenia let out a an exaggerated sigh of relief. The wrinkles look bad at first glance. Although, you couldn’t say that they weren’t. If it were a deep wound to the Astral body then it would be a serious matter. Because it wasn’t a typical wound, you would feel normal for a while. For now, Suimei couldn’t use his left hand.

As Suimei took one last look at it, a flute rang out, surprising them.

“...Military police huh.”



A little bit after being questioned by the military police, who had arrived quite late to the scene.

They were questioned as to why they happened to be here at this particular time. Suimei thought there would be many annoying questions, but it seemed that they knew something, as after their questions they let them pass with no objections. Right now.

After summarizing the necessary bits, they left as if everything was fine. They should have come here for a reason, so there was no way they would just pretend they didn’t see anything and leave right?

Suddenly Suimei looked at the military police. They didn’t seem to be rushing

or fidgeting, but obviously the investigation was going nowhere. As he thought, it seemed they didn't know much about dark magic, so they called over a guild dark magician, who just shook his head a lot.

In that moment, the blockading military police behind them suddenly began to make a racket. The military police formation broke up, revealing a man who was coming.

“—That's unexpected. I'd heard it was the one who was there in the incident with the hero, but to think it was you.”

It was a familiar voice. A familiar sight as well. It was the man who had dragged Liliana away while she was showing him the library a few days ago.

“True... we did meet a few days ago. I saw you were in the imperial military but, why are you here?”

To Suimei's question, the man's face didn't change a single bit as he closed his eyes.

“I have no obligation to answer that to you. What you have to do is one thing. Just tell me what happened here, Suimei Yakagi.”

Did he hear Suimei's name from Liliana? Being questioned and ordered, Suimei smoothed out his clothes and then asked a question.

“I'm sorry but, could I at least hear your name?”

“I am the Imperial Military Communications Colonel, Rogue Zandike.”

It seemed Lefille remembered the name, as she raised her eyebrows in surprise, mumbling.

“One of the seven swords...”



Shadows danced about in the background as if burning the orange magic powered lamp.

At the location of a coma incident. Having chased off Suimei and the others, a small shadow appeared wearing military clothes in front of a robed one who was gazing at the military police.

“Where were you going Liliana?”

The robed man asked without turning around, and Liliana, as if she understood,

“Just, to where the night wind is...”

“I thought I said to not go out uselessly?”

“I’m, sorry.”

Liliana shrank in response to his reprimands. The man then once again spoke to the wincing Liliana.

“Well it’s fine. About the situation?”

“I was able to hear most of it from the military police.”

“I see. And what did their status look like?”

“Same as always. The target of the criminal was again a noble with a bad reputation, and now, without doing a good investigation, they are relying on what the hero thinks.”

“A bad reputation huh.”

Liliana nodded as he repeated her words.

As usual, the military police had no sign that they would do anything. It couldn’t be helped. For both the upper class and the Salvation church, their motivation to intervene was only dropping.

Even the hero who had recently began to investigate couldn’t get anything out of them. They just arrive late every time. To us, the hero as well as the nobles couldn’t be of any threat.

Is what they thought as they returned to the scene with innocent looking faces.

“It might be convenient for me but, recently as shadows the surroundings have become noisy.”

“Colonel...”

Was he complaining because of the recent incidents?

The noble defeated today as well as all of the ones previous were an unpleasant bunch to Rogue, who had recently risen up from commoner status. No, rather than unpleasant, the nobles had been actively working to oust them. The nobles being caught up in the recent incident had brought too much unnecessary suspicion.

There were evil acts. There were, but if Rogue let down his guard to the nobles who were currently scared, eventually he would be buried by their jealousy and crushed.

That is why the Colonel did what he did. The foster father that had picked her up and raised her. Liliana, steeling her resolve with that, was apologizing to the robe when,

“Liliana.”

“Ye-yes.”

Having been called while she was in the middle of her thoughts, her blunder of missing what he said was exposed. But he said no reprimands as if he was gazing at someone who was dying.

“That Suimei Yakagi earlier.”

“What about, that man?”

“I want information about him. Get in contact and investigate.”

To the unexpected order from her foster father, Liliana asked back dubiously.

“To, Suimei Yakagi?”

“Yes, it seems he is somehow related to the incident’s criminal. He was saying that he happened to find them while searching.”

“Colonel. Is he, the criminal?”

“I don’t think so, but he intrigues me.”

“...Understood, Colonel.”

Conveying her understanding, it continued from there as Rogue went to join the investigating military police.

Chapter 4: Anti-Magic Dark Magic

A few days had passed since Suimei's contact with the culprit of the coma incidents. Since then, he had been doing nothing but treating his arm and investigating dark magic without getting a single wink of sleep. He was now in a corner of the Empire's Grand Library glaring at the spine of a book.

"Dark magic huh..."

Dark magic. According to Felmenia who was the specialist on magic from this world, among the eight attributes, it was particularly difficult to use and considered quite special. However Felmenia was not a specialist on dark magic itself, her knowledge ended at the affects it had on the body after being struck by such magic. There was a mage in Astel who did use dark magic, but that person had a reclusive personality, so Felmenia never had the chance to talk with them about it in detail.

That's why even after coming to the largest library in the Empire with a vast collection of books, the ones that wrote about dark magic were few in number. The ones that did only ever mentioned that among all the elements it was the most heretical. Or that without a strong aptitude for it, it was unusable. Or that it destroyed the caster's body. There was practically nothing of use to Suimei. According to Felmenia and Lefille, dark magic users were scarce throughout history. Because of the harm done to their bodies they also tended to die young. This was likely why there wasn't much detailed literature on the topic.

"..."

Suimei unwound the bandage around his left hand and took a look. Magic had pierced the rampart of his brilliant golden fortress and struck his body directly. What he saw was a black haze eating up all the moisture of living matter – darkness. His hand and arm were still showing the aftereffects of the blow. It had completely dried up and was now darkly bruised. Suimei did not know just what it was.

Fire, water, wind, lightning, earth, wood and light were all physical substances that existed. The eighth element of darkness however was more of a form of

energy whose substance and characteristics remained unidentifiable to Suimei. Normally darkness would refer to something that absorbs light, or to the void in space which contained nothing. It was simply a space which did not contain light, it did not mean 'darkness' itself was a physical substance.

While thinking of this, Suimei thought of concepts such as dark matter and dark energy that existed in the world. These were theories required to prove the truth behind physical laws. They existed as matter and numbers without form. If darkness referred to such things, then the spell to create them did in fact exist. Using numerology, Suimei could take imaginary numbers and combine them with the numbers defining the immaterial substances to produce the immaterial in the material world. However, in this world where math had not developed much, the concept of imaginary numbers which were discovered in the 18th century along with the concept of numbers without form could not possibly exist. Besides, even if it did, it would never produce the effect that this dark magic had.

Another possibility was the absolute nothingness. However it wasn't like they could manifest the Buddhist Avidya here. On top of that this dark magic was an attack that had a direct effect on the astral body, something that the Avidya did not do. Thus it wasn't something that could be explained by thinking about it normally. It was capable of interfering with spells and obstructing light, an astral attack which directly damaged the astral body. Suimei was wondering whether there existed a single power which could truly hold all of these characteristics. While pondering this, he spontaneously leaked out a light laugh from his mouth.

“Fu, fufufufufu...”

This was it. This was the time where he struck a wall while chasing after a mystery. It was at such times that he truly felt he was chasing after the unknown. Because of things like this, he could reach his hand into an impossible domain, he could truly feel that he was a scholar of mysteries. He reaffirmed his will to continue down his path as a scholar of the mysteries and that he would unravel dark magic as well.

The level of civilization in this world was relatively low compared to his own.

In that case, it was necessary for his logic and common sense to match that level. It was an age where fuel was used only for heat. No, it was even further back than that. There must have been something in those ages. The mainstream method to perform an attack was to use the work of pagan gods. One would borrow the power from these mysterious existences and use a spell to attack the unreachable astral body. This was also possible with curses from witchcraft, old Gand magic and Ying and Yang techniques. Among the things Suimei was thinking of, it was simple to use a spell to cause harm to someone's mind and soul. But in this world, all magic worked on the premise that the elements must be used. Based on this, Suimei could not think of a spell which was an exception to this case.

(But, at that time, the feeling crawling up my left hand was certainly a deep resentment.)

At the time, Suimei had unintentionally said this, but he felt it. He felt just what that repulsive sensation assaulting his nerves was. That power was surely born from the negativity of hatred and deep resentment. Frankly it was not something that should be wielded by humans. Suimei recalled the one who used that anger filled spell. It was a small body, likely still quite young. Yet they still used this kind of spell. Suddenly the image of Liliana's figure floated into his mind. She had a similar figure to the culprit. If that was the case there was only one thing he should do as a magician...

(My mind is getting jumbled. I need to reorganize my thoughts.)

Suimei's thoughts and reasoning were not lining up. It happened from time to time. When two things he remembered were thinly connected to each other, it was easy to accidentally swap the two in his head like it was the truth. Surely his thought process just now was just the same. There was no reason for him to treat it as a sense of foresight. That's why Liliana couldn't be the shadow, the dark magic user. She wasn't walking down the wrong path of magic.

"... Su... mei... no!"

Suimei was thinking about it carefully. Right now his focus should be on dark magic. It was certainly something to do with negative power. In that case, what element was it using? Or in the first place was dark magic even something that

used an element? It was possible that this assumption was incorrect. In that case, considering that spell, if he followed the flow of history from that mystery...

“... Suimei-dono!”

“—!? A-ah, Menia huh?”

Felmenia had been yelling in Suimei’s ear while he was deep in thought with his head down. As he looked up, he jumped in place from surprise. She had an astonished face as she continued.

“Not just Menia huh? Just what the heck has gotten into you?”

“No, just thinking of things.”

“Au... Did I get in your way?”

Felmenia gave an apology but Suimei waved his hands to interrupt her and brought her over to the desk where he had been camping out at the library for his investigations. While organizing the magic tools he brought for the purpose of reading magic tomes, he inquired about the information he had requested Felmenia to look into.

“So how was it?”

“Yes, I was not able to gather much up on my end.”

“I see. I guess they won’t cooperate after all?”

“It seems information was passed down from the devout followers to the citizens of the empire. All information on that topic is flowing indirectly in this way.”

Felmenia was making a bitter expression. Just as Suimei first thought, gathering information would be difficult. In the end having cooperators keep a lookout was the most helpful method.

“Though the military police were relatively cooperative.”

“What was that?”

“It seems there was an event that brought Elliot-dono into conflict with the military police.”

“Hou?”

“Just a little before the beginning of the match with Hero-dono, the fact that he was added to the investigation of the culprit of the coma incidents is something that Suimei-dono is aware of correct...? When Hero-dono was to set out and begin his investigations, the military police were meant to cooperate with him. However when the time came he used the Salvation Church which was backing him and the title of the hero to have the military police offer him all of their information. It seems he was offloading all of the investigation onto them.”

Having the Salvation Church and the title of hero behind you certainly was a useful hand to be able to play. Despite the corruption of the one who would use this hand, nobody would reject it.

“Well, from what I’ve heard the military police were saying things like ‘the achievements are all taken by Hero-sama,’ while sulking and drinking. There’s quite a lot of ill-will aimed at the him, thus Elliot-dono is probably not getting much out of them.”

The hero Elliot. The only time Suimei spoke with him was that time at the Twilight Pavilion. It seems he was a more of an overly serious character than he originally imagined. Thanks to the efforts of the devout followers he was still able to gather information. Having said that it also seemed he had yet to grasp the truth behind the incidents.

“So what is it? Are the military police using us to fulfill their revenge?”

“It seems they’ve only gone as far as making bets on the conclusion.”

“They sure have no motivation. Even though the citizens are the ones being harmed.”

As Felmenia was catching her breath, Suimei began twisting his finger against his forehead. She then continued as she seemed to have another reason for the military police’s apathy.

“There’s a little more regarding that. After I’ve peeled off what’s hiding behind it I will let you know.”

“Got it. Then there’s the matter of what happened to the noble who came

running to us.”

“Right now it seems he is recuperating in his own home. Similar to the other victims, he has yet to regain consciousness.”

The man who had been struck by the short shadow’s magic was taken away by the military police immediately. Suimei was only able to look at the situation from the side. After he finished his current investigation, it seemed he would have to go see the noble for himself.

“I see. I leave the follow up to you.”



After listening to Felmenia’s report, Suimei was taking a short break. As the two of them settled down on stools in the library side by side, he casually brought up something that had been on his mind.

“Come to think of it, we’re able to converse without any problems, and I’m also able to read the books huh.”

Recently Suimei had been involved in quite a bit of conversation and reading. From the inconsistencies in his conversation with Elliot and the library books in a completely different language, he was able to understand all of it without a problem.

“It must be because of the divine protection from the hero summoning. If I remember correctly we had a similar conversation about this topic before?”

“I didn’t pay it much mind before but now I’m curious. I didn’t hear too much of the details myself, but I wonder why we’re able to understand language so normally?”

“Those who are summoned by the hero summoning ritual have a spell to translate language automatically applied to them as they are called over as part of the ritual. It seems it is based on the knowledge of the one doing the summoning.”

“Hou?”

“In Suimei-dono and your friends’ case, it would be based on my knowledge... If it is something from Suimei-dono’s world, if it is consistent with a concept

that I am familiar with, then the language will be translated accordingly. If it is something that does not exist in Suimei-dono's world, then the language would be left as is but match itself to Suimei-dono's pronunciation. Of course if it is something I also do not know, I believe it will only line up with your pronunciation as well."

In other words there was a limit to the translation based on whether the concept existed or not between the two of them. Back during his fight with Felmenia, she did not understand the words 'barrier magic' at all. That was due to the limitations of the translation. With regards to dark magic, though the concept of dark magic did not exist in his world, the people of this world were simply sticking the words dark and magic together. This could explain why he was hearing it translated. While Suimei was thinking of such things, Felmenia seemed awfully proud of herself as she thrust out her bountiful chest.

"In other words, the reason that Suimei-dono is able to talk, read and write here is all because of my knowledge."

As Felmenia was happily making an 'ehen' expression, Suimei let out a long sigh while simply replying 'You're quite clever huh.' Felmenia then brought up a topic she had failed to bring up before.

"Come to think of it Suimei-dono, in the end, how has your investigation been coming along?"

"It's no good. There's just nothing that can be used as reference here at all huh."

As Suimei said this jokingly like he was giving up, Felmenia made a disappointed expression. She was depressed. Seeing that there was a gap between the way he said it and the way she took it, Suimei quickly established that he was just joking in a serious tone.

"But with regards to a counter-measure, I'm in the middle of thinking of one."

"A counter-measure?"

"Yes, well aside from that there's also the matter of just what it is."

"With regards to dark magic there is still a lot which remains unknown to us... but would using the knowledge from Suimei-dono's world be enough to analyze

it?”

“I don’t think it can’t be done. There’s no way something that exists cannot be explained after all. Well, for now I at least have an objective to reach.”

Suimei replied with a hint of optimism. From all the information he had gathered so far, he at least had some guesses. All that was left was to observe it in practice one more time and to see through it. Felmenia then lightly cocked her head to the side and spoke to Suimei.

“There was something else that has been bothering me.”

“What is it?”

“The word that dark mage added on to the end of the spell they were reciting. It’s something that I also haven’t heard before. Umm...”

Felmenia was frowning as she was unable to recall the words. In her stead, Suimei repeated them.

“Olgo, Lucuila, Ragua, Secunto, Labielalu, Baybaron... right?”

“Ah, that’s right. I’ve never heard of words like that before. Just what was it...?”

As her words tapered off quietly, Felmenia was deep in thought as a voice called out to them from behind.

“Excuse me. May I bother you for a moment?”

The two of them turned around to the voice and saw a man wearing the white uniform of a library staff member standing there. It was the same man that Suimei had gotten acquainted to when he first came to this library.

“The librarian huh. I’m here again today to look into all kinds of things.”

“Yakagi-kun... right? You’re awfully enthusiastic today as well.”

“Well yeah.”

The librarian was giving Suimei a smile praising his diligence and Suimei laughed it off lightly. He then turned to Felmenia who he had not met yet.

“One of the forest people, right? Suimei-dono can you introduce me?”

The forest people, Suimei inferred she was probably referring to elves. The librarian had previously introduced himself as an elf to Suimei, this was likely a second name for them.

“This is Romeon-san, he works here as a librarian. When I came here before, he explained much about the library to me.”

“Is that so? How unusual. I’ve heard the forest people were generally not the type to involve themselves with humans much.”

Felmenia knit her brows while looking at Romeon like he was a something strange. Seeing this, he returned a bitter smile.

“I’m often told that I am an eccentric. I left the forest I was born in to make a living after all.”

Romeon said this in a self deprecating way. It seemed the the elves of this world were similar to the elves from stories in Suimei’s world. They also lived fairly reclusive lives within the forest. Setting that aside for the moment Suimei pushed the conversation back to its original topic.

“By the way, did you need something?”

“No, I was just passing by and heard you talking about dark magic and it piqued my interest.”

As Romeon mentioned this, Felmenia opened her eyes widely in surprise.

“Do you know about it?”

“Yeah, well I had spent quite some time with it after all, so I know a little about it.”



Having heard dark magic being discussed in an unexpected place, Romeon joined Suimei and Felmenia around a desk. As he took his seat, he immediately began talking.

“Dark magic. To put it briefly, among the eight elements of fire, water, wind, earth, lightning, wood, light and darkness, it is a particularly powerful magic. No, fiendish magic... may be a more appropriate way of describing it. So why are the two of you looking into dark magic?”

“Well, it’s this thing.”

Suimei decided it was easier to show than tell and removed the bandages from his left hand. Looking at this, Romeon was quite surprised.

“This is... So that’s why you are researching dark magic...”

Romeon pushed his glasses that had slipped down a bit back up while making a grim expression. Felmenia then began talking.

“If you can tell just from looking, does that mean you know about the symptoms too?”

“Before working at this library I worked for as a magic doctor. I’ve taken on the task of healing wounds inflicted by dark magic before. Yakagi-kun, do you mind if I take a closer look?”

Suimei didn’t have any reason to refuse and gave Romeon a nod as he stuck out his unwrapped left hand. After observing it closely, Romeon put on a face of admiration with a ‘hou’ and took a breath.

“... It seems to have stabilized huh. Normally after being subject to the corruption of dark magic this powerful, the condition would creep all the way to the core of the body... Did Yakagi-kun treat this yourself?”

“Well, I only applied a healing spell I knew.”

“No it’s quite the magnificent treatment method. I’ve never seen such splendid medical treatment before.”

After saying this, Romeon’s suddenly put on a grim expression as he continued.

“Where did you end up to get hit by dark magic?”

“The culprit behind all the commotion shaking up the city used it.”

“—Don’t tell me you were attacked!?”

Suimei and Felmenia proceeded to explain the situation to Romeon. They told him of the fact that they were in a competition with Elliot because of the oracle from the goddess and that a few days ago they came in contact with and fought the culprit. Romeon was listening quietly to all of it while making a grim face.

“... I see, that kind of thing happened... I had heard rumours that Hero-sama was in some sort of match with another person, but to think it was you.”

As Suimei and Felmenia were taking a breather after speaking of the situation, Romeon corrected his posture in his seat and pointed a earnest gaze towards them.

“It’s not my place to say this but— please cease these actions.”

“By cease these actions, do you mean searching for the culprit?”

“Yes. It isn’t something I should be saying as an unrelated party, but if the culprit is a user of dark magic then they are far too evil. If you poorly get struck by dark magic it is possible it could lead to a fatal disease, just the shock from being struck with it is also enough to kill you.”

“Even so, I have two comrades depending on me.”

“But, surely it is not worth your life. Certainly it is dangerous for them to follow Hero-sama but...”

As he said this, Romeon took a glance in Felmenia’s direction. Hearing his frank opinion, she was making a complicated expression.

“Also earlier, Yakagi-kun mentioned the word Baybaron correct?”

Felmenia knit her brows and spoke up at these words.

“Do you also know about that...?”

“I’ve heard those words spoken before quite a long time ago.”

“If you know about it, would it possible for you to teach us about it?”

Romeon gave a heavy nod to Felmenia’s request and began speaking slowly.

“It is something known as a savage name.”

“A savage name?”

“Yes. Savage names were born to this world at the same time as dark magic. They were cursed words lost since ancient times. When used with a certain attribute— basically the dark attribute, they have the effect of amplifying the power of the attribute.”

“Amplification?”

“Yes. Using these words, it is said that dark magic would be several times more powerful than the equivalent level of regular magic. If I had to guess, the dark magic user had appended these words to their spell.”

“Then, the dark magic user is...”

“Probably capable of using significantly powerful dark magic I believe.”

Felmenia gulped at Romeon’s conclusion.

“I’ll say it once more. Please cease this action. No matter how many lives you have it won’t be enough.”

“Regardless, it is something that we must do.”

“For the sake of your companions, was it?”

As Suimei returned a simple nod, Romeon gave up on trying to persuade him and let out an astonished sigh.

“If you’re willing to go that far then there is no use trying to stop you huh.”

“Even though you’ve gone as far as teaching us, I’m deeply sorry.”

“I understand. Just, absolutely do not forget the danger that dark magic poses.”

Romeon then excused himself and returned to work.

“Dark magic and savage names... Suimei-dono?”

Felmenia tilted her head to the side slightly while frowning. While muttering those worrisome words she turned towards Suimei who was staring off into the distance.

“Savage names... huh.”



Since then, having still not caught the culprit, another victim had appeared. On this day, so that Suimei could memorize the layout of the Empire, he was walking across town on his own looking for cats. The military police, the hero and then their own party. Perhaps because the number of investigators had

increased, the culprits actions seemed to have decreased in frequency and their evening investigations had not been particularly fruitful. For that purpose, he was looking for new cooperators in the alleyways, near thickets and in any vacant plots. After a while he had found found and was carrying two cats as he exited the alleyway.

“Hey, stop gnawing at me. Even if you chew on my fingers they aren’t very tasty right?”

After petting the cat once it seemed to be quite please and was play biting the tip of Suimei’s right index finger. Fundamentally a cat’s habit of biting onto things was behaviour meant for attacking and bringing down their prey, but the cat was now doing it to relax and to beg for more petting. While thinking of such petty matters, Suimei began petting the cat as a familiar face showed up in front of him.

“Suimei Yakagi...”

The familiar figure standing before him was Liliana Zandyke.

“—Ooh, twin-tail eye-patch girl huh. Long time no see.”

“Twin-tail... what’s with that? That incomprehensible, nickname?”

“No, well there’s no particular reason. At any rate what a coincidence meeting you here. I got it, so you wanted candy after all huh?”

Liliana did not seem to be in the mood for Suimei’s playful question and replied in a somewhat insecure fashion.

“That’s wrong.”

“So it’s not candy?”

“That, kind of thing, doesn’t matter.”

“Then what’s wrong?”

Suimei asked Liliana who was letting out a grim atmosphere. The atmosphere was tense, but it wasn’t because of Suimei’s light joke, something was wrong. She was just staring at Suimei’s chest and it was chipping away at his composure. Suimei was holding on to two cats at his chest, but...

“G-give mister cat... To me, to me.”

“... Haa?”

Liliana was demanding to have the cats handed over to her while drawing nearer to Suimei with her arms spread out.



Giving in to Liliana’s request, Suimei handed over one cat for her to embrace. He was now sitting on a bench near a fountain.

“Nyan, nyan, nyan, nyan.”

To his side, Liliana was not paying any attention to him while making cat noises and innocently playing with the cat. She was holding on to both of the cat’s paws while mimicking the movements from a famous nursery rhyme. Suimei was watching from the side as she seemed quite happily entranced in her own afternoon paradise. It was the first time he had seen such a soaring, brilliant smile from her.

“Nyan, nyan, gyuuu~”

As Liliana reached the end of the rhyme she hugged the cat. She must really love them. Suimei found this to be quite charming. He then called out to the girl who had completely forgotten he was there.

“Having fun?”

“—!? S-since, when have you been there!? Suimei Yakagi!”

“I’ll be here until you return the cat?”

Liliana replied to Suimei with a disgusted expression.

“Return? This child, to you?”

“Yeah.”

“This child is a stray right? It isn’t, your cat. I will have you, tell me, why you abducted mister cat. Depending on your answer, I’ll have you executed in military court, you know?”

She was accusing him of abduction with a cold gaze. On top of that she was planning on just executing him without any investigation or trial, it was quite

the violent reaction. All this despite acting like a cat in front of Suimei just moments ago.

“Why? I just felt like petting a cat.”

“Mu... Is that right? In that case, it’s fine.”

Suimei was somewhat surprised his explanation was enough. After coming to an understanding, Liliana returned to being completely absorbed in playing with the cat.

“You really love cats huh?”

“It’s not, just cats. I also love, dogs. Animals are, all good children, after all.”

After a short while, while still looking at and playing with the cat, Liliana asked Suimei a question.

“I heard, you are in a match, with the hero, to catch the culprit, behind the incidents right?”

“Yeah, I’m surprised you know.”

“Because, the information, naturally came to me.”

Suimei guessed this was because she was affiliated to the intelligence branch of the army. Liliana was not particularly boastful of the fact as she stated this, and continued her questioning.

“Why, are you in a match with the hero?”

“That’s because my two companions are at stake.”

Suimei briefly explained the situation to her.

“If the goddess says so, it’s fine to leave them, to the hero right? That man, won’t involve them in any trouble, and it will be easier, for you. Also, an oracle from the goddess isn’t supposed to be that common.”

“That’s rather cold of you.”

“It may be cold, but, it’s reasonable.”

“Reasonable, huh.”

As Suimei indifferently parroted her words, Liliana put on a slightly irritated

expression and faced him.

“That’s right. I also heard, what’s wrong, with your hand?”

“So you also heard about this? Yeah, I was done in by that culprit a bit.”

Liliana looked down at Suimei’s left hand wrapped in bandages.

“... Is it, in a bad state?”

“Well it isn’t that bad. It’ll heal soon.”

“Heal...? It’ll heal!?”

“Hm? What, is that surprising?”

Suimei inclined his head slightly as Liliana was acting a little too surprised about this. She then abruptly faced the other way from him.

“N-no, because, I heard from the colonel that it is was quite bad...”

“I see. Well, that doesn’t change my opinion.”

“Doesn’t change... do you, understand? The culprit has, attacked quite a lot of people, a dangerous person. You should, withdraw.”

“You’ve been awfully obstinate about this. Are you perhaps worried about me?”

“—It’s not like that.”

An immediate reply.

“I was told something similar quite recently, but if I intended to drop out halfway I wouldn’t have accepted the match in the first place.”

“Why? Why are you, so fixated on this? Also, if this is needed to save the world—”

It would be normal to just give up. To save the many it was necessary to sacrifice the few. Certainly with the impending crisis approaching the world, it was normal to not raise any suspicions that the goddess’ words would provide them with a clear solution.

“Before that.”

“What is it?”

“Let go of it, it’s enough right?”

Suimei was pointing at the cat in Liliana’s arms. For some time now, the cat’s tail had been waving back and forth.

“Generally when cats aren’t satisfied with the current situation they’ll wave their tails around like that. It must be too warm being hugged like that.”

“... Don’t want to.”

Liliana replied in a dejected manner. And then as she reluctantly let go of the cat, it turned its head towards Liliana and was observing her. It seemed the cat was quite interested in her, and in no way hated her. As she realized this, the sparkle returned to her eyes and she simply stared back at the cat.

“About my earlier question.”

“That’s right. Why am I opposing the Goddess and hero, right?”

Liliana gave him a nod. After taking a deep breath, Suimei gave his reply.

“Hey, do you have anything that you want to protect?”

“Something, to protect?”

“That’s right. Right now, I have two.”

“...”

That was it, he had to do it. Even though it benefited her in no way, Felmenia came all the way here just to help him. In Lefille’s case it didn’t even need an explanation. To Suimei, the two of them were something for him to protect no matter what.

“I don’t, really understand. There shouldn’t, be a reason to go so far...”

“So you don’t get it? Let’s see... For example, how about your family?”

“__”

Suimei felt like he could here an inaudible voice.

“What’s wrong?”

“I don’t, have any family.”

The volume of her voice had decreased quite a bit as she made this

statement. Suimei felt like he had just stepped on a landmine. He wasn't quite sure what had angered her, but he was sure that she at least had a father. He had seen him for himself on three separate occasions. The soldier with swept back hair.

"That man is your father isn't he?"

"Before being a father, the colonel is my superior."

Suimei didn't quite get it. In a normal family, even with that kind of relationship, in times of peace he should just be a father. However when Suimei asked her this, Liliana replied that he wasn't while hanging her head down.

"The colonel is not my real father. Because, I was, thrown away by my real parents."

"... Is that how it was? Sorry. Was it a sensitive topic?"

"Not really."

Suimei apologized once more and answered her previous question.

"Well, I've only known the two of them for a short time, but they are both important to me."

"That's why, I'm saying you're forcing it. You'll just die an early death. Stupid."

"Such a mean way of putting it."

"But, I'm also..."

"Hm?"

"It's, nothing."

After shaking her head as she'd had enough of the topic, Suimei replied with a brief 'I see,' and dropped it. As he took a glance at her face, the sparkle in her eyes had vanished and she was now staring off into space absentmindedly. She stared at the cat who was now stretching out its legs towards her and started playing with it. After she was staring blankly for a while, Suimei spotted a cart selling frozen sweets. He stood up and went to buy two of them then returned.

"Here. As thanks for before."

Noticing that she was being offered frozen sweets, her sleepy looking eyes

looked up at him.

“I thought I said, I didn’t need it.”

“It’s fine isn’t it? You won’t lose anything from taking it, so just take it.”

“I don’t want it.”

“Even if you don’t I already bought it.”

After a short while of hanging her head down quietly, Liliana spoke up in a melancholic voice.

“Why do you, treat me so nicely?”

“Even if you ask why...”

“You should, like all the others, just treat me cruelly, like dealing with something unpleasant.”

It was dark. Her eyes, as well as Suimei’s reflection in them. They were all enveloped in complete darkness. She was thrown away. She was seen as unpleasant. Those words reminded him of her circumstances.

“I’m ominous right? Even though I’m small, I have enough mana to hurt others. I’m aggressive towards everyone. That’s why...”

“Everyone? Like at that time?”

“In the Empire, I am, a symbol of fear. I was created to hide the shadow, of the intelligence branch. A large, dark light.”

“So you’re saying that’s why there aren’t others like me?”

“That’s right. People like you, don’t exist. Other than the colonel...”

As she spoke more of her twisted views, her composure slowly returned. Continuing like this, she dropped her shoulders and became quiet.

“He didn’t seem like the type to talk about unnecessary things, but he’s a nice person huh.”

Suimei let out his opinion of Rogue Zandyke while taking out a piece of jerky from his pocket and giving it to the cat before continuing.

“But, isn’t it painful?”

“That is my job. I can’t deny, that it makes me feel bad.”

“That’s why you resign yourself to the current situation?”

“I’m the colonel’s pawn. If I reject my military service, my place in the world will vanish.”

She was only a twelve or thirteen year old girl, there was no way she should know her future course in life.

“We’re only talking about me.”

“Do you want to hear more about me?”

“... Why in the Empire?”

“There’s just a little something I want you see.”

“That strange magic, where did you learn it?”

“My father taught me.”

“How did you, find the culprit?”

“While looking for them by coincidence.”

“...”

“What, is this an interrogation? Did the colonel tell you to dig into my disposition?”

“Something like that.”

Liliana put on a calm face as she replied. It seemed it wasn’t something that she had to hide.

“—What a coincidence, Suimei Yakagi.”

Suimei turned towards the voice calling out to him from the side, and standing there was the hero Elliot.

“Aah, Hero-sama huh?”

Was he out for a walk or in the middle of an investigation? Either way it was an unusual encounter for Suimei.

“Are you taking a break? You seem awfully at ease. Could it be that your investigation has stalled?”

“Is it alright for you to be walking around here? I heard your achievements have been rather unfavourable you know?”

“Could you not get so carried away because you chanced upon the culprit once? Aren’t you here just playing around with animals?”

It was a confrontational conversation, but there was no sign that it would develop into a dangerous situation. Elliot had only intended to greet him, and after such a gloomy talk, both Suimei and Liliana had both cooled down quite a bit. It would not escalate like it did before.

“Today your priestess companion isn’t with you?”

“It’s not like Christa is always with me. She has her own schedule to follow. Setting that aside, you’re here with yet another girl huh?”

Elliot turned towards Liliana as he said this.

“You sure do react to women quite easily.”

“It’s healthier than reacting to men right?”

“You’re not wrong.”

Suimei shrugged at Elliot’s joke who let out a snort like he was displeased. Elliot then took another look at Liliana.

“She is?”

“She’s not my companion. She’s a soldier of the Empire. She’s in the middle of an interrogating me for abducting a cat.”

“That’s undoubtedly a crime. You should just get yourself escorted to prison.”

“Says you.”

As Suimei stuck his tongue out at him, Elliot turned to Liliana and smiled. Regardless of the fact that the other party was the hero, she put up a wall filled with killing intent and mana. This startled Elliot, but it wasn’t enough for him to lose his composure.

“Am I being hated?”

“Dunno. She’s always like that, I don’t get it.”

Suimei gave a vague answer. He actually didn’t really know Liliana’s intentions

either. Looking at her figure playing with the cat, Elliot called out to Suimei.

“Hey.”

“What?”

Did he want to ask something? Suimei let out a blunt response to which Elliot replied in a serious tone.

“I’ll ask you once more. Why do you disobey the words from the Goddess Alshuna? Even if that oracle’s reasoning lies beyond your understanding, they are the words of the goddess governing over the world you are living in correct?”

“Conversely I’ll ask you why you who have come from a different world would blindly follow the words of this world’s god?”

“It’s not like I’m just blindly following it. I just believe it is what I must do, and accept it.”

Elliot said this while staring up into the clear sky. Suimei felt like he heard these words before.

(Reiji was also like this.)

His best friend Reiji also felt a heavy sense of responsibility for the world that he was not born in. He obstinately insisted it was for the sake of the people of this world.

“The Goddess Alshuna is the god who created this world right? I hear she is omniscient and omnipotent and protect the people from evil. Put that into you head and think about it, could the words of such a noble existence possibly be nonsense?”

“A noble existence huh.”

Suimei repeated those words with a scornful laugh like he just heard a terrible joke. As Elliot was being quite serious, it was obvious that this would anger him.

“What’s so funny?”

“What’s so funny? It’s all funny. Omniscient and omnipotent? Noble? What, are you saying that some god acts completely in the goodwill of man? Like

those things would be so noble. Everyone of those things are the type to mercilessly cut down anything that doesn't benefit them you know? I'm shocked you can hold onto such illusions."

"Illusions? I don't think your opinion has any basis though?"

"... You could say that. But in truth you also don't know right?"

Elliot was unable to reply to those words.

"That's how it is. Like I'll let some existence that nobody really knows about choose my path for me."

"Certainly, you may have a point."

At these thoughtless words, Suimei turned a weird face back to Elliot.

"What?"

"... No, it's just unexpected. Judging from the flow, I just thought you would make me out to be everyone's enemy for slighting god like that companion of yours is all."

"I'm also not one to discriminate against others because of their beliefs. There was more than one god in my world after all."

Suimei waved his hand indifferently towards Elliot's words.

"I see. Then following that it would help if you could take that into consideration for the current situation."

"This and that are different topics. I don't have any idea what it means to have the girl come with us. But if it is necessary to save the people of this world, I will take her along."

"This again?"

"This world all turns with the cogs known as fate. There isn't a single thing that happens without meaning."

"That may be so, but this match is awfully strange if you put it that way."

"If you think that you should simply withdraw."

"Don't be stupid."

With that blunt reply, Elliot had given up on persuading him. Even though the conversation should have been over, Elliot clapped his hands together.

“I’m sorry I bothered you. I’m glad you are someone I’m able to talk to. But—”

After Elliot finished with his pleasantries...

“I hate you.”

“What a coincidence. I also find you disgusting.”

As Suimei said this, Elliot continued walking down the path in front of Suimei. Suimei wasn’t sure whether he wanted to know if he was something he could talk to, or if he just wanted to waste some time. While Suimei was pondering about Elliot’s intentions, Liliana glove had gotten caught in the playful cat’s claws. When she pulled her hand away, the glove rolled up. With that, Suimei could see her hand and arm.

“—!?”

Liliana quickly rolled down her sleeve and hid her arm. It seemed that Elliot did not notice what was under her glove.

“What’s the matter? Are you alright?”

Elliot had been too slow to see anything, but Liliana still did not answer him. In a fluster she turned towards Suimei, and then quickly stood up and turned away.

“Excuse me!”

As she ran away, Suimei could not even call out to her. What was under her glove, as if possessed by an evil spirit, was her skin, which was completely black with a rough, bumpy texture as if it had been altered...



“—Suimei-dono, is it true that you figured out the identity of the culprit!?”

“Suimei-kun, is that true!?”

Felmenia and Lefille’s surprised voices rang through the air. Suimei had explained it briefly to the two of them when he returned to the house. The two of them stopped what they were doing immediately and rushed over to him.

Felmenia was in the middle of studying magic and was in a bit of a slovenly state not having groomed herself yet. Lefille had been taking care of several cats and rushed over with some of them still hanging onto her. Suimei returned a nod filled with complex emotions.

“... Yeah.”

“What’s wrong Suimei-kun? If you found the culprit, then isn’t a good thing for both this country and ourselves?”

“That’s true, but also not quite...”

Suimei let out a sigh with a troubled expression. Felmenia was somewhat confused and spoke up.

“What do you mean?”

“Previously, I said I met with Liliana right? While in the middle of looking for cats, I bumped into her again today...”

Suimei frankly gave a rough idea of the situation as well as his conjecture to the two of them who were quietly listening with intense concentration. While in the middle of slowly giving out the details, what he must do slowly took shape in his head. What he believed in, what he must do. For himself, in this other world, with regards to this incident in another world, to surpass the wall that was the conflict with the summoned hero, what he must do became clear. After all this time it wasn’t something that he should have had to even think about. Just like he had done up until now, and from now on, he would just have to do that. As Suimei hardened his resolve, resonating deep within his ears were the words— save the woman who cannot be saved. Those words his father had left him.



It was nighttime. On this day, the short shadowy figure of the culprit behind the coma incidents – Liliana Zandyke – was moving alone on the information she received from the taller shadow to strike down ‘those nobles who will bring harm to Rogue.’ While soaring through the night sky, she began weaving together her spell to create the dark and confusing domain with her mana. She was already quite used to building this spell. Deep in her heart she had an

unsettling feeling rising up, but she decided to pretend it wasn't there. Without a sound, she landed on her shadow created by the full moon.

At times like this, a thought would suddenly pass through her mind. Did she just land on her shadow, or did her shadow land on her? Whenever she used powerful magic, she sometimes gets lost in thought about this fact. Just which one was her true self, that darkness shaped figure she was stepping on, or the figure illuminated by the moonlight?

While hanging her head down, she saw her shadow distort on the roof tiles. It was like it was smiling evily back at her. She knew this was just an illusion, but perhaps this was why her heart was unsettled. The taller shadow was not here to remind her of her purpose with a whisper as it usually did. They had some other business to attend to, today she was acting on her own.

Generally the two of them took action together, but just like this day, there were quite a few times where she would do so herself. She did not have the support of the taller shadow. But because of her experience in participating in multiple military operations, she was not anxious. Conversely, when she thought of it carefully, it was a such a simple job that it could be said to be foolish. Her opponent wasn't even worth talking about after all. Both the military police and the hero would be unable to find her. However, there was one thing she was worried about, the possibility that Suimei Yakagi would once more appear before her. He could not be dealt with by ordinary means after all.

“ ... ”

As she recalled the events from the afternoon, she came to a stop on the rooftop. That afternoon, by Rogue's command, she came into contact with Suimei Yakagi and carelessly exposed her arm to him. Under her glove, was her unsightly, transformed arm corrupted from the use of dark magic. She wondered just what he was thinking about when he saw that. Like all the others, he probably thought she was a monster. When she thought about it, he was the first person aside from Rogue to talk to her without any fear. It may in fact have been the first time that she talked so much with another person.

She descended from the roof, removed her eye-patch and looked into a window illuminated by the moonlight. What was reflected was her own face,

her left eye, and one other thing. It was something a human should not possess. A right eye that looked like it belonged to a dragon. Her eyelids were covered in small black scales and her pupils were standing vertically like a narrow slit. The white of her eye was instead golden. Everyone who had laid eyes on this had come to detest her. They called her a monster. Her real parents were no exception to this.

If he saw this, would he just continue talking to her normally? He was different from the others. He didn't get carried away with the loud voices of others, a nice person. Suimei Yakagi. At first he had given Liliana a rather rebellious attitude, but after that he was just a meddlesome person making a gentle smile. The next time they meet, it would be nice if he was still the same. If he did, they could maintain their current relationship. That was why Liliana did not wish for him to look for the culprit. She didn't want him to look for her. He would have to give up on those that were dear to him, however if Liliana never got caught, there would be neither a winner or loser. That's why she prayed, on this day, the he would not show up.

“Nyao.”

“ ... ”

The sudden meow brought Liliana back to her senses as if she had cold water poured onto her. A cat was there once again. Sitting atop a wall, it was looking at Liliana with its tail wrapped around it. Ever since the last incident, it was something she saw quite often. Could the cat have been calling out to her with that meow? While letting her imagination run wild...

“Eh—?”

She realized. In her surrounding, many eyes were looking at her. She was surrounded by the golden glint of the eyes of many cats. Everywhere she looked. Cats. Cats. Cats. From the top of walls, the shadows of buildings, the rooftops, the tree branches, on the brick pavement, from everywhere she could see, cats were looking at her. Since when were they there? Where did they come from? Why were they looking at her who was hidden with darkness? Just what was going on? Nyaa. Nyaa. Nyaa. Nyaa. Nyaa. Nyaa. The ominous meows from the cats and their golden eyes were oppressing the darkness around her.

After a short while, the meowing came to an abrupt stop. Then the cat she first spotted opened its mouth as if it was to let out a meow, but no sound came out. It was just like a yawn. It was something cats often did, however Liliana felt let she could hear it meowing regardless.

“—It can’t be!”

Just then, she remembered and came upon a realization. That day that Suimei Yakagi appeared before her. Surely on that day, she was also spotted by several cats. After being being spotted by them, Suimei Yakagi appeared. Today, Suimei Yakagi was carrying cats. The stray cats of the Empire did not normally become attached to people, but they were so obedient at the time. She didn’t even think about what he was using the cats for... She had no idea what kind of trick he used to enlist the aid of cats. She did not know whether or not they were cooperating with him. However Suimei Yakagi used magic that she knew nothing about, an unusual foe.

The people around her all denied the mysteries that they saw before their eyes. They all simply memorized the words they were taught by the teachers from the Mage’s Guild. They would all say, ‘there’s no way you could do that,’ while fettered down to their ways as a mage. In that case, on the previous occasion where cats were observing her while meowing, and on this day where cats were without a doubt gathering around her...

As she came to her conclusion, the cats all turned to a single point and started leaving. In their stead, coming over the slope of the hill towards them, was the silhouette of a human. The surroundings of the person were extremely dark and all she could see was the imprint of a deep violet figure. It was a darkness far more sinful than what she herself used. It must have been someone who had attained wisdom beyond her own...

“So, we meet again.”

The shadow that appeared – Suimei Yakagi – said this quietly. It was not the familiar greeting that he had given her up until now. His voice and eyes had a hint of pity as he spoke to her.

“Aah...”

Liliana involuntarily let her voice leak out. In the end, he did not give up.

Though it was a bit roundabout, she even told him to do so. In the afternoon she had told him that it was dangerous to get involved with her, the next time he won't just get off with light injuries.

“Sorry. I ended up wasting the warning you went out of your way to give me.”

“!?”

Warning. As Liliana heard that word, she felt like Suimei was reading her thoughts and her heart jumped.

“Hey, you're Liliana right?”

After her heart recovered from the shock of beating with all of its strength, Suimei thrust this question before her. How did he know? There was nothing she did that would have revealed her identity. However his eyes were filled with conviction. His eyes were telling her he already knew the answer. In that case, there was no point in feigning ignorance.

“—How, did you know?”

“Just, somehow or other.”

Suimei's reply was just too frank, yet without any hesitation. Following up on that, Suimei Yakagi continued speaking.

“Why are you doing this kind of thing? Even if you are part of the intelligence branch, causing these incidents aren't actually part of your work as a soldier right?”

“There's no need, for me to tell you about that. About the reason I'm doing this, or about myself, you have nothing to do with any of it. If you, want to hear about it no matter what...”

Liliana manifested the mana she had been gathering. In an instant, the surroundings were struck with the dense mana. The walls and pavement in their surroundings began to erode as if struck by acid. She was preparing for war. Suimei also understood what she meant.

“I'll have to force you to, huh.”

Suimei replied without paying any mind to the mana and continued talking.

“Anyways, I have something I want to tell you.”

“To get quietly, caught? Or, that what I’m doing, is wrong?”

“No, I’m not in a position to judge whether what you are doing is right or wrong. Nobody told me whether it was the guys under your magic or you yourself who is the bad guy in this situation. In short I don’t know about the situation, so there’s no reason to tell you to stop.”

“Then...”

“Even so, there is something that I cannot accept. The magic that you are using.”

“The dark magic...?”

“That’s right, Liliana. I want you to at least stop using that magic. For a person to remain themselves, it is something that they must not touch upon.”

“What are you basing that on?”

“I have my reasons. If you want to hear them, I’ll gladly tell you.”

“I don’t have, any reason to be, told that by you. I will only do, what I must. That’s why...”

She would attack Suimei. She would use the excuse that it was to defend not only herself, but that person as well. She was caught on whether or not to use dark magic. Even though he was not one of the nobles who were her enemy.

“—Tch.”

While thinking of such things, her mouth which was supposed to chant the spell would not move smoothly. Was this really alright? Doubt was swirling around in her mind. However, now that she was running down this path, it couldn’t be helped. While she was running, until someone stops her, there will be no end. Thus...

“—Oh Darkness. Thou art the ephemeral darkness which colours the entire world. With neither magnificence nor ominousness, nip all the sprouts of fate. Olgo, Lucuila, Ragua, Secunto, Labielalu, Baybaron..”

After her chant, she followed up with those savage names, and next was the

keyword.

“—Turn all hope into the equivalent despair.”

Immediately, all the shadows in the vicinity gathered together into a single bubble-like sphere. Everything around them was warped by the bubble. The city lights, the stars, all lights had their colour stripped away by the magic. Warping away everything on its trajectory, it rushed without error towards Suimei Yakagi. As he saw the bubble rush towards him, he calmly opened his mouth without a single hint of uneasiness.

“—Aski-Kataski-Haix-Tetrax-Damnamenus-Aision...” (Darkness steps aside for the light, regain the truth of the land which has fallen into despair with sunlight...)

Even the moonlight could not reach the darkness of the bubble as it enveloped Suimei... Was it over? Among all of Liliana’s dark magic, this one was especially powerful. That man who could not block the magic she fired at him before could not possibly defend himself from it. The countless people who had been struck by the bubble before had all had their entire body covered in darkness after the bubble vanished and would be unable to remove it for all of eternity. They were all bound to die. Without exception.

“... So stupid.”

Liliana was not sure if her words were intended for that man or herself. Her quiet curse with no target vanished into the darkness. This result was naturally something she did not wish for. However she had no other choice. As long as she had no intention of surrendering, she could only render her opponent into a state where they could not make her surrender. However even so, regret filled her heart and was stuck there. It could be, that this was the first time she managed to make a friend. However those feelings vanished in the dark bubble.

“So... Stupid...”

Before long the magic was coming to its end. The tightly bound bubble of darkness slowly dispersed back into the surroundings. However, in the centre of the darkness opening up like a flower, the one who was supposed have fallen to the ground, Suimei Yakagi, was not there.

“ah...”

The first thing she saw was a brilliant white magic circle. It was a beautiful circle filled with symbols and letters she could not understand. Did this protect him from being devoured by the darkness? Above the circle, not even a single speck of a shadow could be seen as the brilliant moonlight poured down on it. Liliana thought she heard the brisk sound of fingers snapping together. To Liliana’s left, the space where darkness was floating by suddenly exploded in a shockwave which blew all of the darkness away. As if she regained her sense of time, the sound of her surroundings returned to her. The trees were rustling as if they were afraid of something. Rubble was clattering against the ground as if it was laughing. From the red bricks, to the steel fences, to the silver gates, all the colour in the world had been plucked away and was now entirely dyed in grey like a dull painting. The entire area transformed into a crisp autumn night before she realized it as the moon was tinted with a red light as she looked up at it. And in its centre...

“—That magic, won’t work on me anymore you know? Dark mage.”

His crimson eyes were glaring down at Liliana strongly, the single figure of a mage was right there.



Tonight, Suimei had two goals in mind for confronting the source of all the incidents. This would be his third encounter with the culprit and the dark space she used. However, unlike before, he knew the identity of the culprit and aside from the two of them, there was nobody else present. Right now, Felmenia and Lefille were not here. For the sake of convincing Liliana, he had told them to stay back. If there were others present, there was the possibility that she would be more cautious and run away. That’s why he came alone. By himself, he wanted to meet this girl who had been forgotten by god. He wanted to inquire as to why she was doing such things, and to stop her from using dark magic.

“No way, why...?”

Perhaps because he had perfectly defended against such powerful dark magic, Suimei could hear a quiet bewildered voice. What Suimei had used was defensive magic. It was a spell which invoked the charm carved out by the

moon goddess Diana of Ephesus. Gods were existences largely composed of components similar to astral and aetherite. This spell was meant to defend against curses and was effective against attacks to his astral body. Aski-Kataski-Haix-Tetrax-Damnamenus-Aision. The words stood for darkness, light, the land, sunlight and truth. They protected against evil powers from higher dimensions. It was a spell that was generally never used in a fight between two respectable magicians. On nights where the moon was prominent, this magic was especially effective. It was also particularly effective against dark magic.

“The element of darkness was something said to me quite often. The one who established this magic system himself must have been unsure whether or not this was truly the origin of its power right until the end.”

Suimei let this out with a sigh, yet Liliana knit her brows together as she did not accept his words.

“What, are you saying? The element of darkness, is the servant of the goddess, a single power of mages.”



“Nope, it isn’t something like what you people call it at all. It seems every last one of them misunderstood. That’s why just like I did, I have a way of defending against it.”

“—tch, Oh Darkness. Thou art like the lightning racing through the air. Don’t look back, drown the one before you in darkness!”

Liliana fired off her magic. It was a straightforward yet fast spell. However, the dark magic in this situation did not take advantage of any of the darkness in the surroundings. It was unable to reach Suimei who was under the protection of the moonlight. Just like that, striding forth with a complete air of composure, he was toying with her. As he stepped forwards he snapped his fingers towards Liliana and the brick pavement before her feet exploded. Her expectations had all been completely shattered as she was standing stock still in surprise.

“—When I first got hit by that, I had a rough idea of just what kind of thing it

was. There aren't that many things that can cause such harm directly to the astral body after all. It could be a mystery brought forth by the powers of an evil god or the work of a pagan god. A suicide attack used by the devil worshippers with unwavering faith. An intrinsic spell. A curse. The attack of apparitions. Among all of those, spells which drive feelings of hate, resentment and envy directly into their opponents are among the oldest techniques. They only carry emotions, the spell itself is quite simple and has no real concept. However it is just that much more powerful, it was something seen quite often in ancient religions."

"... That's, what does that have to do with the power I use!?"

"Do you get it? The element of darkness does not exist. 'The hatred and resentment held by people turn into curses and creates an actual effect on another,' just as this kind of thing exists, a curse born of hatred with nowhere to go in the transient world could coagulate into the real world."

It was the oldest shape taken on by curses. In other words, it was a mass of hatred born from people, animals and all living things. No matter where you went, these thoughts existed. If those were to strike a target, it would be able to strike them regardless of any defences. This was the reason the rampart of the golden fortress was penetrated. A rampart was only a wall. It couldn't stop pure emotion. If it was a weak magic which pierced his spell, the curse would be blocked by his natural defences as a magician. However when the curse itself was stronger than his defences, there was no way for Suimei to stop it after it penetrated his rampart. This applied even more when the curse was even more powerful than that. This was the key difference between these curses and the power held by demons. After once more defending against the magic fired at him in irritation, he continued speaking.

"However, that kind of thing is normally not something that can be used by just anyone. When it comes to someone quite skilled it's a different story, but using hatred to cause another person to fall into ruin requires pure and true hatred for the target after all. However, there are some who can use it freely at will disregarding this. They are people whose hearts attract the hatred and resentment of all living beings in the air. This applies to you right now."

"Are you saying I hold onto such feelings?"

“That’s about it. From your speech and conduct, I can tell that you can use that kind of magic. You might not be self aware of this though.”

“That isn’t—”

“That isn’t true, huh? Even if you say that, the proof lives beneath your glove. That is a coagulation of resentment and hatred. Because you use that kind of power, it corrupts and alters the easy to affect extremities of your body. It’s very probable that also applies to what is under your eye-patch right? The effect of using that power with your body is the transformation of your body from something that is no longer human.”

Liliana immediately held down her eye hidden behind her eye-patch.

“That’s right. The spells that you use are curse spells that humans should never touch upon. You don’t need me to tell you this, you who uses such magic yourself should know right?”

“But I am, if I didn’t have this magic, I am...”

“Stop it. That magic will destroy your body. It isn’t too late to stop now. Stop using dark magic and devote yourself to healing your body. If you don’t you’ll turn into something that isn’t you! That’s why.”

“That’s why...”

As Suimei continued to try and convince Liliana, behind her, a heat haze shimmered as if conforming to her malice. Just as if she came to her senses, she opened her eyes wide open.

“—Th-that’s why what!? I know that much! I at least know that if I keep using this magic I’ll eventually be swallowed by the darkness! But you should have absolutely no relation to me right!? Then why, why do you fuss over someone like me!?”

“Because as a magician, I do not approve of that way of living as a magician.”

Dark magic was qualified as a magic system. It was called a type of magic which surpassed just being called a hidden art. It was something defined as sinister all the way back to the Latin age. This sinister art was considered corrupt and evil and using it would lead a magician down the path of ruin. This

way of life was considered as wrong in the world of magicians. That was why, Suimei could not allow this girl who was running full speed towards her own ruin to continue living that way.

“Aside from that, because I’m a whimsical, meddlesome person.”

“—”

As Suimei said this with a troubled smile, Liliana was completely dumbfounded. Suimei then continued as if inquiring about her true feelings.

“Hey. Are you really alright with that kind of life?”

“Eh—?”

“That way of life where you destroy your own body, there isn’t one good thing about it right? You may not regret it, but if you keep using dark magic you will never be happy you know?”

Liliana vigorously shook her head side to side like she was trying to shake out all of the words going into her ears.

“But if I do that, I won’t be able to fight! The me who cannot fight is not needed by this country! Is not needed by the colonel! I was thrown away by my mother and father! I’m all alone! I was picked up by the colonel, came to the Empire, for the first time I had a place in the world! Even if that meant becoming a human weapon! Even if everyone hated me! If I don’t have dark magic, I will, I will once more...!”

“Is that really alright!?”

“!?”

“That’s not true right!? What you wanted, what you really wanted wasn’t something so painful right!?”

Liliana surely also had something she truly desired. There must have been something she wished for deep in her heart. It was definitely not this sort of painful life. If she was able to make such an innocent smile as she did in the afternoon, what she truly desired could not possibly be something so miserable.

“What, I really want...”

“That’s right. What you really want is—”

Suimei was once more trying to plead her to come to her senses. However, Liliana cut him off.

“Shut up! If nobody needs me for anything except for fighting, then I’m fine with how it is!”

She screamed out her refusal with more emotion than she had up to this point. As she screamed into the night, the darkness she had been gathering went berserk.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!”

The darkness that was pouring out of her like smoke was a curse. Or rather, pure malice. All the deep resentment that was released into the real world was joined to Liliana’s body and was pouring out with dreadful vigour. This was naturally because it all sympathized with her heart. With her scream as the origin, all the world’s hatred gathered around her like a cloak and overturned all of her emotions.

“Stop it!! Don’t take in the darkness of your own will!!”

An enormous amount of malice was blowing up from below with Liliana at its centre. To save her, Suimei disregarded his own body and set forwards without looking back.

“Guu, AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!”

Hearing Suimei’s scream of agony, Liliana came back to her senses and opened her eyes with a snap.

“Wh-what are, you...”

“Don’t, take it in... You can’t. This path, isn’t one you should be walking down...”

“Y-you can’t. If you get closer, you will also be taken by the darkness!”

The darkness, the curse, the malice, closed in on Suimei’s body. It was a concentration that could not be considered on the same scale as the dark magic that Liliana fired herself. If he did not strengthen his spirit, it felt like it would ravage even his very soul. This was a race against time. He didn’t have the

leisure to invoke the protection of the moon. Even though he heard her words, he began the chant to save her.

“Luce sacra, Adutror umque ero corrigendum... Guu.” (Fill up with sacred brilliance, return it to its proper form... Guu.)

Suimei was calling out the chant to push aside the curse with his eyes closed. The cold sweat from his brow dripped down to his nose and spread to his cheeks. The fact that he could so clearly feel this sensation could only be attributed to how strongly his sweat was pouring out. The vigour of the enormous curse was not weakening. The darkness from the surroundings swirling around Liliana was assaulting Suimei’s body.

“Gu, Ah... Ah... This damn—!!”

Suimei mustered all his strength with fighting spirit. Suimei’s hand finally reached her, and he grabbed Liliana. And with all his might, he threw her out of the cursed whirlpool as he dragged her out. Liliana rolled on the ground by reflex as Suimei collapsed to the ground. Realizing what had just happened, Liliana stood up dumbfounded and looked towards Suimei.

“Suimei Yakagi...?”

“Idiot... No matter how you put it that was where you were going to die.”

Suimei was gasping on the ground, but he still showed her a smile. Looking at that situation, realizing her own foolishness, Liliana fell to her knees.

“I’m so... sorry...”

“Seriously... I’m begging you to just calm down...”

Suimei was trying to relieve her with his now blue face that was still smiling. If Liliana who brought this to the world calmed down, it would all end. While thinking this, Suimei quietly sunk to the ground. However, it wasn’t something that could calm down so easily.

“Mu—”

“Eh—?”

Suddenly, the world began to shake. It felt like the entire world was turned perpendicular as it shook violently, however when Suimei observed his

surroundings, nothing in the environment was moving despite all the shaking. Even the trees and the rubble on the ground had fallen deathly silent. It was not an earthquake. It was a different phenomenon, it was— the shaking of the mysterious power in the air.

“Tch... Too much malice gathered up at once huh.”

Suimei cursed as he observed the shaking world. Presently, a normally impossible phenomenon was occurring where a plane was taking shape, or perhaps it was a phenomenon that often occurred when one called forth power far beyond their abilities. Either way it was shaking the streets of this other world. The malice pouring out of Liliana had surpassed the limits of the space it occupied. If it has gone that far, then the dense malice would take actual form in the world.

Shorty, just as Suimei had predicted, the malice became something that one could both see and hear, becoming an extreme circumstance. The human malice which took the shape of a black haze gradually changed from a black night to more of a bluish purple as if reflecting the darkness and lingered in the air. The silhouette which had yet to take on a proper shape let out a shrill scream filled with sorrow as well as a deep voice born from a cluster of envy. All who heard it would lose themselves and have discomfort deeply planted in their minds. It raised all the hairs on one's body.

“T-that's...”

“A plane, appeared. Get away from here...”

When the a plane took shape, it was a common omen for lightning to strike out at the surroundings. While ravaging the surroundings, the malice transformed into a more concrete shape. And then, what came down was a truly repulsive figure. There wasn't a hint of roughness. The pitch black contour of the body was perfectly smooth. Arms and legs were draped down from it as if its skeleton was stripped out. The surface of its body was all slime. Where its head would be, was a single blood red light imitating an eyeball buried into the right side. It was like a distortion of the ugliness of humanity all moulded together as one, as if it was drawn by a child. However, if this truly was the shape of humanity's worst aspects, Suimei had to admit the design couldn't be

any better.

The sinful figure began crying out. The jarring shrill voice, the deep voice, the child's voice which knew all of the world's darkness, the voice of an old man who thought the whole world was stupid, all the voices of the evil spirits assaulted their ears repeatedly with detestable voices all interlaced over each other as they echoed in the air, all filled with resentment.

"A-aah..."

"Don't listen to those voices. You'll get pulled in."

Being struck by the unpleasant feeling brought on by the myriad of repulsive voices, Liliana's body began to tremble. Her emotions had been in an excited state, thus it was easy for the voices to affect her. Realizing this, Suimei grabbed onto her shoulders and stopped her body that was shaking against her will.

The sinful figure began to move. The bricks that made up the pavement it stepped on turned black as it walked over them. As it moved forward, the air around it became corrupted. Just with a single step, its influence on the world was unfathomable. Seeing this, Liliana raised her voice in distress.

"I-if we don't run... That's... It can't..."

The emotion stirring up strongly in Liliana was dread. For a normal human, upon seeing that before them they would simply give up on living. As one who admired magic, her uncommon reaction was something that he understood.

"What will you do by running away? We can't just leave that kind of thing alone."

"But, it's impossible... How will you cleanse that kind of thing? Besides, with that body..."

"When you tell me it's impossible, I'm the kind of person who suddenly wants to do it."

As Suimei said this fearlessly, a scream was fired at them from nearby.

"—!!"

The repulsive voice resonating throughout the residential area became a shockwave and assaulted their bodies. The voice did not leak out from the

plane created by the malice, but sooner or later someone would notice. The voice was enough to drive any living being mad as the figure strode towards them calmly while eternally converting the world it touched instantly into hell. This was something Suimei had to stop.

The sinful figure jumped. Using its two human-like legs it sprang into the air with movement like a beast. Looking at the strange leap in disbelief, Suimei used magic to gently lift Lilliana into the air and send her to a nearby hedge. Matching the jumping figure, Suimei leaped backwards. It would be bad if it hit him. No matter what it touched, seeing what happened to the bricks and surroundings, the outcome was clear to Suimei. After landing, the shadow stretched out and closed in on him. Suimei fired off his attack magic at it. One, two, three, four snaps of Suimei's fingers left the figure completely unperturbed. Suimei leaped to the side to evade it.

Unexpectedly, the sinful figure did not take chase. From the beginning it probably did not even understand the basic concept of a battle when it rushed at him. It was simply lashing out. It was clinging to its emotions. It wanted to increase the misfortune around it. No matter where it went it was just malice. On the other hand, the figure was now carelessly flinging around its enormous rubbery arm. Its slimy cylindrical arms did not taper off to a point, but as it began waving around both of its arms like a storm it crushed the pavement and walls around it. Its destructive power was clear.

Suimei was protecting his face with both arms as he peeped at the situation before him, enduring the shockwaves and pebbles flying in the air. Just as those flailing arms had come to a stop, Suimei thrust out his finger like a dagger and shot lightning at his target. 'Abreq ad Habra'. As he quietly chanted his magic, the blue spearhead slammed into the sinful figure and dispersed. The figure convulsed briefly from the hit. Suimei had fired it off in a hurry so the effect was weak. The sinful figure immediately regained its footing, however its limbs had become a mess and were moving around randomly.

"... Look. Certainly, that is something made up of all the malice in world. However, since it is a mixture of all kinds of different emotions, it doesn't even know what it wants to do. That's why its movements are so irregular, like a swarm trying to control a single body. That's why it is not something you need

to fear.”

“Uu... But...”

“Don’t get fainthearted, if you get enthralled by that then it will truly be the end.”

Suimei gazed at that sinful figure which could stir up the latent fear in people. It’s grip on the human heart was not something that could not be dispelled. It was always on the prowl for the tiniest gap in the hearts of those around it, any would block their ears before such a repulsive existence. It was something that should absolutely not exist in the world, pure evil.

The sinful figure was still wailing in its jarring voice. At her wit’s end, Liliana plugged her ears. She was shaking her head desperately trying to get rid of the voice. That appearance was something appropriate for a girl her age. She was not someone who should have her body eaten away by malice. That’s why, no matter what situation Suimei ended up in...

“I can’t withdraw.”

The sinful figure once more began moving. While letting out a high pitched scream like sharp metal grinding together, it ran down the slope while breaking everything in its path. It was charging forward like a meteor. Everything before it was not moving, but everything behind it was blown away. If he was hit by this, there was no way he was going to walk away from it. Suimei was using his eyes as a magician to find a way of evading it, but...

“Gu, u...”

Pain was running through his entire body. The body that was eaten away by the malice when he saved Liliana from going berserk was screaming in pain at the worst time possible. Because of the pain, Suimei lost the timing to evade the attack. He had lost a few precious seconds to his consciousness, by the time he regained his senses, it was already impossible to evade.

“In that case, it’s fine as long as I don’t evade...”

Suimei shaped his right hand like a blade and a hexagram formed around it. The sweat on his cheeks was falling to the ground. And then, the anguish that had no intention of stopping bore its fangs at him. Liliana was yelling at him

from a distance, but he did not hear her. He could not hear her. He made up his mind. At this intersection he would definitely destroy it. Thus, he stabilized the mana at the tip of his fingers. It was currently night time. He could not use the cleansing blue blade. The Blue Inscribing Slash would not manifest here. It was necessary to carefully select his magic. Soon all sound had ceased. With the removal of all noise, within this stretched out time was only Suimei and his opponent. The wind brushed gently against his cheek.

“—Quit pestering me.”

While instinctively letting out those words, what was left was the sinful figure which ran past him, the hexagram which was sticking out of the figure after quite literally piercing through it, and his right hand shaped as a blade. Without hitting the brakes, the sinful figure plowed into the pavement and dispersed into the air. The winner of this gamble by a hair's breadth, was Suimei Yakagi.

With the destruction of the sinful figure, the oppressive atmosphere in the air also vanished. Shortly, Suimei's body was assaulted by the fatigue from the fight and the corrosion of his body from the malice he had received earlier. While enduring the pain, he walked over to Liliana and sat down.

“It's over.”

Liliana could not believe what had just happened before her eyes. With her eyes still wide open in surprise, she looked at the spot where the sinful figure dispersed together with Suimei.

“I'll have you tell me of your circumstances now... Why are you doing this...?”

“Th-that's... The nobles are trying to harm the colonel. That's why that person suggested this action.”

“That person? That other guy who was with you...?”

It happened while Suimei was in the middle of speaking. The sound of the military police's whistle rang through the air. The sinful figure had appeared in a manifested plane of existence, there was no way the military police could have realized the disturbance that had happened. Then why... As the footsteps and angry voices drew nearer, Liliana's shoulders jumped in surprise. Before long, with Elliot in the lead, Christa and several military police arrived at the scene.

“Over here!”

Elliot’s beautiful voice rang through the air. After arriving and surveying the area, he spotted the collapsed Suimei and Liliana and put on an extremely confused look.

“Suimei Yakagi and if I remember, you are...”

“Why are you lot—”

Just as Suimei was in the middle of asking them why there were here, he suddenly realized it. That Liliana who was next to him was trembling without showing any signs of stopping. It had happened suddenly when Elliot and the military police came with their loud footsteps and yelling. After having the malice flood out of her body like that, her heart was already at its limit.

“Shit, what bad timing...”

Suimei let out a groan with a bitter taste in his mouth. Due to the interruption from this uncalled for group, he lost his chance to calm down Liliana and talk to her. The situation was slowly deteriorating, even so Suimei decided to get up.

“Whatever, it seems like it’ll become a little troublesome but, let’s go.
Liliana.”

“I’m...”

At the height of all the confusion Suimei stretched out his hand to Liliana, then it happened.

“Is it really alright like this? If you stop here you won’t be able to reach your goal.”

“—!?”

At the sudden voice, Liliana’s body was shaking once more. When they looked up, a tall shadow was standing on top of the roof.

“You’re—!?”

As Suimei raised his voice, the tall shadow paid him no mind and once more spoke to Liliana.

“What will you do? I don’t care either way. But that’s not the case for you

right?”

“U-uu—”

“You can’t! Don’t listen!”

“—Go.”

The tall shadow pointed out in the direction behind him. Was he telling Liliana to go that way? At the same time, a sudden gust of smoke flew into the surroundings. Elliot and Christa remained calm at the sudden event, however the military police had their composure completely broken.

“Shit—Guu!?”

Suimei could not move. As he tried to get his legs to start running, his body rejected it. It was because of the malice he was exposed to when he saved Liliana and the damage he received from fighting the sinful figure. He had pushed himself too far already, thus he was unable to push himself anymore. Liliana did not seem to know what to do in the middle of the chaos. She was trembling, and then...

“A-UAAAAAAAAAH!”

As if turning her back on everything that happened while screaming, she went in the direction the tall shadow pointed out with a leap over the slope of the hill.

“Gu... L-liliana... Don’t go...”

Gripping onto his chest and gasping for air, Suimei stretched his arm out to where Liliana had disappeared to. At the crest of the slope, as if standing in his way, was the tall shadow.

“You bastard...”

Suimei let out a curse towards the tall shadow with sweat pouring down his face. He could see its mouth twisting into a scornful laugh.

Epilogue

The tall shadow who helped Liliana escape finished its confrontation with Suimei and the others and was now peeping in on them milling about in confusion with a sneering smile. It was now standing atop the second highest place within all of the Empire, the Filas Philia Cathedral's bell-tower. While being careful of Suimei Yakagi's unusual senses, it was observing the scene. The military police had surrounded the area. The hero was rushing over to Suimei. While asking about the situation his attendant was about to cast healing magic on him, but Suimei seemed to have firmly rejected it. The tall shadow began to gather its thoughts on what action to take from here on.

With this case, this was the second blunder they made. Setting aside the military police, the hero's power posed a considerable threat, but it was still fine to leave them alone. With the current situation they would all be stalled after all.

However—Suimei Yakagi. That man could not be underestimated. Who would have thought that while the shadow was disturbing the movements of the hero's group that he would once more catch onto Liliana's movements and make contact with her?

“... Fumu.”

The tall shadow did not know what had happened within Liliana's dark domain, but as Suimei had met her already on several occasions, it was likely he was in the middle of trying to convince her to stop. Thinking about it like that, this was a dangerous situation.

However, even this danger was not something for the shadow to fret about. After being struck with so much dark magic, he will die... No, there was a chance that he would recover, however even then he would not be able to move around as he wishes for a while. There should be an effect after using his magic after all too.

This time, they had not yet seen the noble being attacked, but Liliana's face was seen by both Suimei Yakagi and the hero. In that case...

“It’s about time that that little girl’s use is already...”

Leaving behind that cold murmur, the tall shadow vanished into the darkness.