

The different world magic is
too behind!

遅 れ て る

異 世 界 魔 法 は

樋辻臥命

Gamei Hitsuji

Illustration: 猫鍋蒼

8



OVERLAP

Isekai Mahou wa Okureteru! [LN]

The Different World Magic Is Too Far Behind!

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by Gamei Hitsuji

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「魔の技を使えるのはお前だけではない」

ルーカス・ド・ハドリアス

「水明、気を付けて！」

遮那黎二

八鍵水明

Prologue: At the Demon Lord's Castle

The stronghold of the demons existed at the very extremity of the north.

Just as the dragonnewt Eanru sarcastically said to Ilzarl about him having 'cold meals,' the region was eternally plunged in an intense cold of never ending snow and ice. It was a place where humanity would be unable to make a living. No, that was not limited only to humanity, it could be said that all living creatures could not live out there.

In short, it was a land at the extreme limits. However, located in those extreme lands, to beings who needed no such things as the activities needed to live, they may not have even been conscious of the intensity of the region. Rather, precisely because it was a place that humanity couldn't push through, it could be said that there were those who thought it was perfectly ideal for a stronghold.

If humanity was unable to live in that climate, it would be no simple feat to attack them. So looking at it from that perspective, it was truly an ideal location for a stronghold. And the demon stronghold in those lands could even be called a proper castle.

There were stone walls, spires, ramparts and gates. If ten people saw it, all ten would describe it as a castle just from its appearance. It's structure that looked like it was given birth from the civilization of humanity setup a somewhat unsuitable sense to it since they detested humanity. But perhaps it was because the demons who had a human shape stood at the peak of the demons. So the fact that it ended up in a shape that was easy for a humane shape to live in, could also be said to be perfectly natural.

Deep within the castle, in a dull and dimly lit room, angled light poured in from the opening door. The light which peeled back the darkness of the room, was the warm light given off by fire which almost seemed inappropriate for those who wielded the dark coloured powers of the Evil God. And sliding in from the small crevice of firelight, was a single shadow.

“Excuse me.”

Showing courtesy as they entered the room was a female demon wearing deep blue armour wielding a large sword. With tanned skin, white hair and blood red eyes, she looked completely human at a glance, but because she was constantly surrounded by an aura of blood thirst, it was difficult to say that she was in any way normal.

In any case, as if waiting for the woman’s arrival, the candlesticks placed inside the room lit up. And what was revealed were those who were seated and waiting. The young girl with black hair and dark skin, the Demon Lord Nakshatra. The man with blonde bangs gloomily hanging over his face, Lishbaum. The woman with bat like wings, Latora. The good looking man with long silver hair, Ilzarl. They were those who controlled all the demons in the world.

“So we’re all here...”

“Long time no see~.”

Matching the female demon’s arrival was Ilzarl’s discontent voice, and Latora’s friendly greeting. However, the female demon didn’t react to either of them and glared over them as she immediately knelt before Nakshatra.

“We have been waiting, Moolah.”

“Oh master who serves as our Lord. I am extremely delighted to once more have an audience here with you here this day.”

As the female demon—Moolah’s greeting came to an end, she bowed down her head while still kneeling down. Immediately following that, in accordance with Nakshatra simply saying ‘At ease,’ she stood up, and headed towards her seat.

“—The demon generals who warm these seats have certainly decreased in number huh.”

Moolah gave out her indifferent impression without hesitation.

“It cannot be helped. It just means each and every one of them who suffered defeat from mere humans were insufficient to fulfill the ambition of our God.

They were too weak.”

“Good grief, it is exactly as you say. Despite having far more of our God’s divine protection than the others, it is a disgrace for a demon to suffer a defeat from mere humans. Not only that, it also disgraces Nakshatra-sama’s sacred name. Let alone garbage, they are lower than dirt.”

Her words towards the defeated, were curt. No, merciless. As if spitting out that power was everything and that there were none in the world who would voice any objection. It was the doctrine of the strong, the survival of the fittest. That was frankly speaking, the way of the demons.

“—However, what will we do about the vacant seats? As one would expect, leaving them empty leaves quite a large hole...”

It wasn’t good. Even Moolah understood this. Demons were beings who strove towards only a single goal, but those who led the mobs—the vanguards of the Evil God’s will, were essential. If they moved their armies while those vanguards had been worn down, it was inevitable that the demons would break down into chaos. If they all moved individually and only followed their own wills, even the humans who held less power than them would easily defeat them. As Moolah held those apprehensions, Nakshatra gave a generous nod as if she was in full agreement.

“Regarding that matter, it has already been decided. Lishbaum.”

As Nakshatra spoke, she exchanged glances with the single demon who appeared in this land and performed the duties similar to a staff officer and served the Demon Lord. In response to her calling his name, Lishbaum spoke while making exaggerated gestures.

“The answer we have arrived at, is for Moolah-sama to take lead of several of the army corps.”

“Several you say? Currently I have been entrusted with a single group of pawns you know? Are you saying that you plan on further increasing my workload, bastard?”

“Yes. Just like the other generals, we would like you to gather together three or four units.”

“Lishbaum. My original purpose is to protect Nakshatra-sama. In spite of that, saying that you would push other duties upon me seems somewhat unreasonable does it not?”

“We are short on hands after all.”

“As the main perpetrator of that situation, just what are you saying?”

Moolah sent a gaze over to Lishbaum like she was piercing through him. It was so sharp it could be said she was literally reading between the lines. And certainly, there was something behind Lishbaum’s smile—

“Oh my, so you’ve seen through me. However, that was not a useless expenditure. It was a necessary one.”

As Lishbaum replied like it had all been arranged, just this once, Moolah replied to him with a gaze filled with killing intent.

“... Just what are you thinking? What purpose are you here for?”

“The same reason as all of you. To eradicate all life from this world. That is all.”

“Does that have any relation to reducing the number of pawns?”

“Yes.”

As that was very clearly pointed out to him, he replied without any pretense. As she continued to glare at him, Moolah was unable to read just what that light deep inside him was implying. Giving up on probing any further, she took her seat.

“... Just as I said before, I have the duty of protecting Nakshatra-sama. That is a priority that I hold above all else. However, if Nakshatra-sama so desires it, I shall comply.”

“So Moolah-sama says, how about it?”

As Lishbaum turned and asked the Demon Lord, Nakshatra made a somehow delighted faint smile. And then...

“Moolah, commander of our elite guard. Let us request of your great efforts shall we?”

“Ha. Though I may be inadequate, I will exert myself to the fullest.”

“Very well. Then are there any who object in Moolah taking action as a single general?”

As Nakshatra asked, Ilzarl lifted his eyebrow as he replied.

“You’re asking us? I have no complaints towards the strong.”

“I’m thinking the same as Ilzarl~. I have no complaints with someone powerful, rather, if its the commander of the elite guard, isn’t it a job that she’s more suitable for than we are? Right~ Nakshatra-sama~?”

And Moolah was the one to react to Latora’s frivolous reply.

“... Latora. Despite being a demon, just what is with that way of questioning Nakshatra-sama?”

“What? The fact that I’ve been like this from the start is something Moolah knows well isn’t it~?”

“I’m saying you should know your place.”

“After all this time? Nakshatra-sama, it’s fine right~?”

“We do not mind.”

Nakshatra sided with Latora, and Moolah silently accepted it without showing a discontent face. To Moolah, Nakshatra was absolute. She would never protest against her. As that topic came to an end, Lishbaum once more began speaking.

“Incidentally, there is something that I would like everyone to look at today.”

The first one to react to him, was Ilzarl.

“Hou? So that means one of your damn schemes is coming to light?”

“Yes. It is this.”

Saying that, Lishbaum leaned his body back a little, and lightly looked behind him. Matching his gaze, the others in the room looked in the same direction, but—there was nothing there. Finding the situation suspicious, and being aware of Lishbaum’s abilities, they all observed him carefully.

Eventually, Lishbaum’s shadow opened up eerily, and from within it, an even

larger shadow appeared. What appeared, was a figure more grotesque than any figure even the inhuman beings in the room had seen before, but it was definitely a demon.

It had many eyes lined up horizontally in an asymmetric fashion, and a single insect like mouth part leaking out acid like saliva. It had enormous arms that would match a human adult, but dangling down from its bulging shoulders, they had distorted bones and protruding horns sticking out all over it. Its skin was dark purple. Its body was swollen in bumps, and it was easy to see that its body was well forged. At a glance, it was enormous. And it was ugly to the point where it couldn't even be compared to the current demons up until now. However, what surprised the ones in the room more than that, was the vast amount of power from the Evil God that the demon held.

“Uwa, this is... Seriously?”

“Hou...?”

Naturally, the reason Latora pulled back slightly was in part due to its aesthetics, but Ilzarl's admiration was focused solely on its strength. As they raised their voices in surprise, Lishbaum courteous attitude remained unchanged as he faced Moolah.

“This is the answer to the doubt that Moolah-sama had been holding on to just now. The demons up until now have been tossed into the kiln, and fresh pawns have been made.”

“... Beings of this extent, just where have you been hiding them?”

“Within the interval.”

“... With your damn power?”

As she remembered Lishbaum's ability once more, she muttered like she was convinced. And then, there was one who raised their voice in doubt.

“—However, Lishbaum. From what I've see, it does not seem to have the intelligence of the pawns up until now?”

From the pawns he knew of, the demons who had wings had enough intelligence to understand human language. However, the demon before Ilzarl's

eyes only had a violent ferocity which completely painted over any intelligence, there was not a single hint of the light of intelligence deep within its eyes. Intelligence had a direct connection to strength. However, Lishbaum did not seem to perceive this—

“As long as it is made obedient with the power from the Evil God, intelligence is not particularly needed is it? With enough power, a brain that thinks of meaningless matters is nothing but an excess.”

“For a bastard like you who values using his brain, it’s a strange answer.”

“Our utility is different. So to speak, this is a symbol of fear to the humans. If it was given intelligence and understood human speech, some of that fear would fade. Not knowing what their opponent is thinking at all, is something that those with intelligence fear in of itself.”

“Especially those frail humans, is it?”

Seeing that Ilzarl agreed, Lishbaum nodded in satisfaction.

“So how about it? Have I shown you something that meets all of your expectations?”

“You’re saying we’re going to bring these things along with us from now on right? With this couldn’t we get things done with a lot fewer numbers than we were using before?”

“Certainly, if we had more of these, those damn humans—even the heroes would be nothing special.”

Latora and Moolah each muttered their impressions and consented. However, Ilzarl once more raised a steep voice.

“Lishbaum. Incidentally, there is something that I would like to ask you.”

“Is there a problem regarding this?”

“No, about something else.”

With that, Lishbaum seemed to get a hint, and made a smile like he was caught in an ominous joy.

“In other words, what happened just recently right?”

“That’s right. You seem to know that human, but just what does that mean?”

Saying that, Ilzarl pointed a cold gaze towards him. It was none other than a question probing Lishbaum’s relationship to Suimei. In response, Lishbaum smiled provocatively back at him. As for Latora who had heard this for the first time...

“Hm? Eh? What’s this what’s this? You have a human acquaintance of something?”

“Yes, well.”

Lishbaum admitted it without hiding anything, and as if remembering something that happened before, he looked up at the ceiling as he spoke.

“Originally I was in a world other than this one you see. Even in that world, I was doing something similar.”

And the one to respond to that first, was as expected, Ilzarl.

“Something similar... huh. The place you were didn’t necessarily have the Goddess and Evil God. In that case, was it the extermination of the offerings?”

“Though the goal was different.”

“The goal was different? Is the extermination itself not the goal?”

“To me, that is only the means. In a sense, you could say that my goal is the antithesis of yours.”

The one’s present didn’t seem to be able to understand the nuance behind his words. Only the Demon Lord Nakshatra was laughing with a knowing look.

“Fuu... Just from exterminating all the offerings, I don’t think there is anything for you to gain though.”

“No, that is not the case. From the very beginning, I never wanted anything.”

Since the ones present had never touched on the many ideologies of man, they likely could not understand.

“Well, in the end I was defeated by the man. Since I was attached to another phase, I lost a fair amount of power, and should have been buried beyond the horizon of dimensions, but... Let us just say that I was fortunate to be forced

into the physical world. And that is how I am here now.”

Bringing that talk to an end, Lishbaum pointed his gaze at Ilzarl.

“Ilzarl-dono. Rather than myself, what about you?”

“What about me?”

“The humans are the same to you as meals. To bring ruin to them on your own, it is like you are striving towards your own death is it not? Just what thoughts are you holding on to while you lend your powers to Nakshatra-sama?”

It was certainly as Lishbaum said, as the fierce god who ate men, cooperating with the demons meant Ilzarl was getting rid of his own food source by his own will. This was none other than a contradictory action as a living being. However, he showed a composed air like it wasn't a problem at all.

“Even if they are food, with so much riff raff, aren't they simply an eyesore? Without thinning out a certain amount, they are nothing but troublesome.”

“And so you cooperate with us? You say that they are troublesome, but we may very well annihilate all your food right?”

“No, you are unable to annihilate the offerings.”

Hearing Ilzarl's statement, only Moolah was rubbed the wrong way as she knit her brows. But in any event, Lishbaum spoke up.

“And, what is the reason for that?”

“It's nothing complicated. It just a matter of how gluttonous those offerings are. Contrary to expectations, they are tenacious. Even if you kill them and kill them some more, they'll immediately surge forth from somewhere else. No matter how many of their numbers you reduce, no matter how much you corner them, they always will. Since you say your objective is to exterminate those offerings, I do think it is something you understand right?”

As Ilzarl pointed that out, Lishbaum narrowed his eyes like something had come to mind.

“... Certainly, you do have a point that they are beings who live in filth.”

Lishbaum voiced his agreement. However, to Moolah, who held the demons, in addition to the Evil God and the Demon Lord as supreme existences, their words were not something that could be pardoned. Somehow managing to suppress her urge to draw her sword on the spot, she glared at the two of them while raising her voice.

“Ilzar! You bastard, how dare you deny the ambitions of our God in the presence of Nakshatra-sama!?”

“What, did it touch your nerves? Despite putting forward such a calm air, you’re unexpectedly quite short tempered.”

“Bastard...”

As Moolah fired off an intense blood thirst towards him, Ilzarl treated it like it was nothing at all. To that fierce god, even Moolah’s sharp blood thirst was but a gentle breeze.

“It is fine, Moolah. Stand down. We united fronts with Ilzarl knowing of his thoughts.”

“With all due respect, even without someone like this, we would not fall behind mere—”

“Can you truly say you wouldn’t? In reality, the majority of those who occupy these seats fell behind those ‘mere humans,’ as you would put it.”

“That only means that those who were defeated were poor at their jobs.”

In response to Moolah who showed no mercy towards the defeated, Ilzarl looked at her with a somewhat disappointed face.

“Are you saying you’re any different?”

“Do you want to try and see?”

Taking his words as provocation, this time Moolah began to pull her sword out of its sheathe. As the situation reached the critical stage, their fighting spirit began to clash in between them to the point where lightning and sparks were manifesting, and the one to raise their voice in mediation, was Nakshatra.

“Moolah, Ilzarl, put a stop to that.”

As she passed down those words to them, Ilzarl turned a faint smile to Moolah.

“So she says. So, what will you do, oh commander of the elite guard. Will you go against Nakshatra’s will and fight me? I absolutely do not mind either way you know?”

“... Remember this.”

While glaring at him in annoyance, she returned her sword to its sheathe. However, even so, she wasn’t able to suppress her hostility, and her fighting spirit and blood thirst remained as it was. Watching her resentfully do so, Nakshatra spoke up once more.

“Moolah. To fulfill our ambition, Ilzarl’s presence is necessary.”

“... My master. Could you indulge this foolish self of the reason behind that?”

Saying that, Moolah knelt down before Nakshatra. And as she did, Nakshatra suddenly made a suggestive smile—

“That is—to compensate.”

“To... compensate?”

“That’s correct. All phenomena known as incidents that occur and are caused in this world, without exception, will have slight deviations. If you do not have a flexible sense to take that into account and compensate for that, one day it will lead to failure.”

“That’s—”

“I won’t let you say it doesn’t you know? It is for that reason, that the demons have come so far without fulfilling their aspirations. Is it not? Our little bundle of demons is especially weak to unexpected phenomena.”

“Then, to compensate for that, Ilzarl was invited in?”

“Lishbaum is also the same. And in reality, they are doing fine work. Currently, there are certainly foreign bodies on the enemy side that we are unable to deal with ourselves, and they have become the power that restrains them after all.”

“By foreign bodies, you mean the four heroes?”

“Your field of vision is too narrow, commander of our elite guard... Fumu, in that case, it may make sense to have you face those damn humans yourself.”

As Nakshatra muttered out like she was convinced, she glared over each of those there that had fought in battles, and spoke once more.

“Then, we will give our orders. First, Moolah. Just like Lishbaum informed you earlier, you will hold the additional post of a demon general. What you do may be the same as it has been up until now, but you will no longer have the right to refuse to lead an army. And so, you will take your current pawns and push into the northern lands where they are short of hands. If it goes smoothly, those who get lured in should answer your earlier question regarding tenacity.”

“All is as you will.”

“Lishbaum. You will throw the remaining pawns in the kiln and hurry with increasing the number of new pawns. We have the leisure of time, but if we give the heroes too much of it and they build up too much strength, it would be a poor move. Do at least keep that in mind.”

“It is certainly understood.”

“As for the others, you’ll have some free time until the new pawns are gathered. Once a sufficient amount are gathered, this time we will seriously attack the humans. Stock up your powers until then.”

Hearing her words, all besides Ilzarl lowered their heads with obedient expressions. Seeing that, Nakshatra leaked out irrepressible joy from her mouth.

“—Now then, humans. It won’t go quite as your Goddess planned you know?”

As she left them with that ominous prediction, the Demon Lord silently departed from the room where the demon generals gathered.

Chapter 1: After Being Found Out

The war between the Nelferian Empire and the demons, before the decisive battle on the grassy fields could happen, ended in the unthinkable form of the demons' retreat.

To the humans who were supposed to take part in the decisive battle with the demons where a large amount of casualties was expected, it was probably an unexpected boon. However, the price for that was the lives of thousands of the soldiers on the front line.

No, price wouldn't quite be the correct way of putting it. It was due to Lishbaum's magic, 'Cross Dimension (Free Manipulation of Space),' the magic which made him one of the Ten who Fell to Greed, that the necks and torsos of the soldiers and even the mountains were all split apart. However, to the demons, that massacre was completely unnecessary. It was nothing but a sideshow triggered by Lishbaum's whim while he was withdrawing. It was like he was insinuating that they shouldn't think of that retreat as him being defeated.

In any case, as Suimei and the others were not targets of the Cross Dimension technique, Phase Severance, after all the demons retreated, they ended up swamped with work dealing with the aftermath. In spite of there being very few people left, they had to deal with the corpses of the demons, hold the memorial service for the lost soldiers, call for reinforcements and remain vigilant of the surrounding area. There was a mountain of work. Even Suimei and the others were herded in to help, and now things had finally started to calm down.

While the soldiers were still restlessly running about, having been temporarily relieved of work, Suimei and Reiji were on the other side of a tent in the middle of taking a break—

“—Well, how do I put it. What I want to say is, you know.”

“Eeh, aaaah, uuuh, what Reiji wants to say is...”

With their backs to the tent, shoulder to shoulder, one was talking like they were scolding the other, and one was trying to wipe away an unpleasant sweat.

Of course, it was obvious that the former was Reiji, and the latter was Suimei.

In any case, the reason it ended up like that was entirely because Suimei had been hiding the fact that he was a magician, and because of the confrontation with Lishbaum during the battle the other day. Regarding the fact that Suimei was hiding the fact that he was a magician, Reiji did at least understand it to a certain point, but sentimentally he wasn't able to keep a calm attitude about it.

"It's true that I'm also in the wrong for deciding to fight the demons without even consulting Suimei about it, but you know..."

"Un, un. That's right isn't it~, that was horrible. Among the troublesome things you've brought back with you up until now, I'd put it in the worst three."

In a complete change from his apologetic expression before, Suimei poured it on with a uselessly triumphant expression. On the other hand, since Reiji was Reiji, he did seem to have been worrying about that.

"Ugu... That's why I'm saying that was my bad..."

"But you know~"

"B-but you know!? To keep quiet about it all the way up until now, isn't that just a little too cruel!?"

"Eeh? N-no no no, I've been saying that I've got circumstances here..."

"But even so, when Mizuki ended up like that, I think it would have been about the right time to talk about it though. Don't you think so?"

"Th.... That's about when I thought I should tell you about it! I'm not lying! If you ask everyone you'll know!"

To prove that he had the will to do so, he began to drag in the others. However, in society, that was a failure known as letting the cat out of the bag.

"Ah..."

By the time he realized, it was too late. Reiji looked at him with while squinting with a look full of criticism.

"... Heeeh, which means~, other than me and Mizuki, everyone knew huh~? Tia too, and even Graziella-san~."

"... Um, sorry 'bout that. Really, sorry 'bout that."

As one would expect, Suimei's only option regarding that was apologizing. Just as Reiji said, when Io Kuzami appeared and he showed them the Sacrament, it would have been the best time to talk about it. The failure to do so with that timing, was entirely Suimei's fault.

"... I understand that you split up from us to find a way back. Since it's Suimei, I know that it was also for our sake. But you know, even so, isn't it proper to tell us about that seriously?"

"I have nothing to defend myself with... It is all because my heart is too weak willed."

Being struck with a perfectly sound argument, Suimei repeatedly apologized as he deflated into a tiny, tiny man. On the other hand, perhaps because Reiji felt somewhat gratified reducing his friend to such a state, and he let out a sigh as if putting off that discussion. And then...

"I was also in the wrong, so... Let's just let that balance it out to zero."

Saying that, Reiji brought it to a close. However, Suimei took on an attitude like he objected to that.

"No, what are you trying to take advantage of the confusion for? Your actions still have way more minuses you know?"

"EEH!? Isn't this the flow where we just treat it all as water under the bridge!? If Suimei is going to rehash all of that then I still have a lot to say too!"

"I-I've also been holding back on a ton of stuff I have to say!"

Saying that, the two of them began to bring up each others mistakes from before they came to this world. About how Reiji ended up being surrounded by girls who created a scene of carnage and how Suimei just abandoned him. About how Suimei had to go through all sorts of trouble due to a girl who liked Reiji bothering him. They were only criticizing each other about nothing but stupid problems, but... In any case. As they used up all of their strength arguing, while heavily breathing...

"Haaa... Haaa... Hey, could we just, stop?"

"Uu... Well, you're right. It's certainly a bit stupid."

The dispute that heated up to the point where they were short of breath came to an end as they sensed that it was counter productive. Putting an end to their useless quarrel, they let out a sigh filled halfway with regret. While making a disheartened expression from having so many mistakes brought up, Reiji suddenly sat down where he was and looked up at the sky.

“All sorts of things happened until now, but in the end, is this first time we really spoke openly to each other?”

“... Yeah. You’re right. With this, there’s no more secrets between us after all.”

Following after Reiji, Suimei also sat down with a thud. Just as he said, he no longer felt obliged about having to keep a secret, and his heart had cleared up. And then, for no particular reason, they felt deeply moved. And while they were holding on to such feelings of loneliness and clearheartedness, Reiji shifted his focus to the unnatural open space of the military encampment. Yes, just the other day, right in that place, a ghastly scene unfolded—

“Lots of people, died right there, huh.”

“Yeah... As I thought, do you find it tough?”

“That’s not it, how do I put it...”

As if it was difficult to say, Reiji mumbled. Just what emotions was he holding on to? Suimei did have an idea as to what Reiji seemed unable to digest deep in his heart.

“—It doesn’t have, a sense of reality to you, right?”

“... Un. I think its imprudent, but the fact that those people died all feels like it’s just a bad dream. I also helped everyone with the memorial service, but why do I still feel like that?”

Reiji was troubled as to why he didn’t find it sorrowful that a lot of people died. Perhaps he was simply bewildered. Or perhaps he was worried that he wasn’t able to hold the emotions any proper person should be holding in such a situation. Or perhaps because so many people abruptly died, his emotions simply couldn’t keep up. As one would expect, the reason he held on to such thoughts was because he had never seen so many people die right before his

eyes. And there was one more possibility Suimei could think of.

“That’s because, this is a different world from the world we live in... Probably.”

“Because it’s a different world?”

“Yeah. To put it an an extreme manner, this world is not the reality that we know of. The things we see, the things we hear, even the common sense of our world, it’s like a place that’s completely separate. That’s why, the things that happen here feel like they have nothing to do with the matters of our world. Deep down in your heart, you feel that way. And so, you end up thinking it’s all something like a dream, right?”

That was it, Suimei was able to identify the sense of unease deep inside Reiji’s heart. However, because he was able to correctly identify it, Reiji suddenly noticed something.

“Could it be, it’s the same for Suimei?”

“Yeah. Just a little.”

“I see. So it’s the same for Suimei who has been dyed by the occult.”

“That’s just how much of a shock the existence of another world is. It’s not just you and me. Even the magicians in the other world reject the idea of the possible existence of other worlds or parallel universes.”

The existence of other worlds was disconnected from reality. It was different from just discussing the existence of other life forms on far away stars. It was a fantasy which started as a result of a fantasy, nothing but a story that came up in dreams.

“A dream, huh.”

“If it was like that this time, it will surely be the same from now on. However—”
“However?”

After Reiji questioned him, Suimei didn’t reply. However, the time you wake up from that dream, is none other than the time that you lose someone precious. Just like it was for Suimei. Just like when his father that he met in that dream, was forever lost to him. Seeing Suimei’s lonely expression, Reiji seemed to come to an understanding, and took an accessory out of his pocket.

“Suimei, when it comes to the occult... Or mysteries was it? You’re knowledgeable right?”

“Well, more or less.”

“... This, is it amazing?”

“The Sacrament huh.”

Looking at the object Reiji took from his pocket, Suimei let out a long sigh. Sacrament. It was the item that gave Suimei the resolve to let out his secret. Reiji was asking if it was amazing. If he was asking just how tremendous it was, then the answer was obvious.

“Fundamentally, that thing is something unmanageably dangerous you know? I think you probably know more about that than me though...”

“Is that so? Even now I think it is amazing, but how do I put it, I felt like it was only me who thought that way.”

It was probably exactly as Reiji’s impression indicated. Right now, he must have felt like there was something more to it that he didn’t know about. Right now, Reiji likely only knew about the heightened senses and physical abilities it granted. However, the pinnacle of that weapon known as a Sacrament lied elsewhere.

“I don’t know a lot about those things, but I did witness the power it hides before.”

“For example?”

“... The first time the Sacraments were used for military purposes in our society, was about four years ago. At that time, just from a single use, Sacraments blew away forces at the scale of an army division. And it happened ten times.”

“Ten army divisions you say, ummm...”

“Other than that, what was it? Right, I asked that guy the same kind of question before. He said a single division was composed of around ten to twenty thousand or so people. So at a minimum it would be around a hundred thousand people.”

Reiji looked completely startled at Suimei’s answer.

“A-a hundred thousand... No matter how you put it, in a single battle that’s a little...”

“You’re right. There would be armoured and air force units attached to it, so the damage would become absolutely absurd wouldn’t it?”

“That’s not what I mean! That’s not what I mean at all! I’m talking about how a hundred thousand people in a single battle is too many! I thought modern battles were unlike historical ones and the ones of this world where many people gathered in a single place and fought right!?”

“No, that guy said so after all. No matter how wide and high a battle was, it could gain total control of a tremendous region where the land forces were deployed using some technique or something. Well, there may have also been a tactic or something to get them to fight out of necessity like that—That’s why other than guerrilla warfare, moving around large forces is measured in the tens of thousands, and that’s before throwing in the hidden magicians, so—”

—I was shown a nightmare.

“A nightmare...”

As Suimei muttered in a severely cold tone, Reiji audibly gulped down his saliva. Yes, it was during the war which started around six years ago in eastern Europe. In that place, the allied armies of the Middle East and South West Asia were said to be feared, and triggered the nightmare of the Eastern European war.

- The first event. The Falling Heaven Sword which brought about the tragedy that gave rise to the curtain, ‘The Night the Sky Fell.’
- The second event. The Polar Vortex Sword which froze all hearts and fears, ‘The Midsummer Blizzard.’
- The third event. The Trembling Sword which buried everything in sand, ‘The Giant Tsunami of the Desert.’
- The fourth event. The Lightning Gathering Sword which degenerated the battlefield, ‘The No Response Site.’
- The fifth event. The Haunted Water Sword which granted the pain of drowning above ground, ‘Death by Drowning on the Hill.’
- The sixth event. The Anvil Sword which forced its way through the forest

and transfigured everything into metal, 'The Steel Forest.'

- The seventh event. The Rotting Ashes Sword which scattered ashes into the lungs and ate away at them like worms, 'The Lung Disease which Could Never Be Healed.'
- The eight event. The Thirsty Rose Sword which extracted all blood and left empty husks behind, 'The Tomb of Briars.'
- The ninth event. The Rampaging Sword which turned all gunfire towards friendly troops, 'The Friendly Fire Incident.'
- The tenth event. The Death Puppet Sword which gave birth to the pursuit of death from one's own shadow, 'The Killer Doppelganger.'

Those events caused by Sacraments using power beyond the knowledge of human intellect smashed heaven and earth to pieces in Eastern Europe.

"..."

As Reiji heard about what happened, it was unavoidable that he was at a loss for words. On ten occasions, ten thousand or so lives were lost in battle. And he was also aware that such overwhelming power was in his hand.

"We went a bit off topic, but it's better to recognize that thing in your hand as something super dangerous of that level. It's very likely that it should be able to do the same thing."

"This is, that much..."

"It probably is."

Making sure to emphasize that with his preface, Suimei ended up following up in an ambiguous way. However even that probability was something that wouldn't be denied. If it was equal to the paranormal weapons Suimei knew about, it would in fact be able to reach the gods. As for Reiji who had attained one, he would be the person who could bring the fight to an end. Reiji continued to simply stare at the Sacrament. And then with slightly trembling laughter, he spoke of his out of place impressions.

"If it's that amazing, you'd think it'd be known to the public though, but that isn't the case huh."

"In our world, everything related to the mysteries are unconditionally hidden

after all. Just by being well known to the people, the perpetual universal theories would crumble and lose their stability and become a mess. Moreover, the overall number of Sacraments is low, they can't currently be manufactured."

"Is that so?"

"I hear there's places researching them, but they're completely unable to reproduce one. They can't even make something similar it seems. Well, if they're able to reproduce it, apparently it would solve the world's energy problem though."

"Why's that?"

"It's the blue gem inserted into it—the Lapis Judaix. I think you know that that's the source of the Sacrament's power but... That's the foundation—it's the place all consumed energy arrives at."

"The place consumed energy arrives at? What's that? Doesn't energy vanish after it's consumed...?"

"You'd think, but it seems that's not the case."

Hearing that, Reiji tilted his head to the left and right. He likely couldn't understand what he was being told at all. Because it wasn't a scientific explanation, it couldn't be helped. While Suimei tried to think of a way to explain it and line up his thoughts, he didn't let Reiji's groaning go unnoticed, and finally began summarizing it.

"Let's set aside whether or not consumed energy vanishes. The point is that it can take all heat energy ever born in the world and—"

"Wai-wai-wai-wait a sec! Isn't that super outrageous!? It uses used energy!? The energy used in the world up until now isn't in the same dimension as simply colossal right!?"

"That's why I told you right? It's dangerous."

Just as Reiji losing his cool implied, it was completely abnormal. Though Suimei carelessly letting out that kind of truth was another thing altogether. As he once more emphasized how preposterous the Sacraments were, Reiji lost

the ability to even laugh at it properly, and just let out an intermittent dry laugh.

“... There would absolutely be wars over this kind of thing huh.”

“It already happened. In Eastern Europe.”

“Eastern Europe as in... The third Eastern European state war!? The one going on right now!?”

“Yup.”

After Suimei casually confirmed it, Reiji was at a loss for words as he held his breath. The third Eastern European state war—it was the war where the Sacraments Suimei brought up before were first used for military purposes. On the surface, it was a war about race and religion as the people confronted each other. But in truth, it was about ‘the creation of the Lapis Judaix to develop a new energy source, and the oil export magnates who feared it.’ And the Middle East and South West Asia boldly started a war over it.

It had already been nine years since the war started, but the end was still not in sight. Due to the devil like strategies surrounding that man, it was a mystery why the war was still not over, but there must have been a reason behind it. Despite thoroughly chipping away at the opponent’s ability to continue fighting, and despite the balance between the enemy nation’s military hardliners and peace seekers swaying, if they hadn’t yet defeated them, there was still something going on behind that war.

Perhaps it was a magician, or someone else who held a Sacrament. Suimei had no clue, but setting all that aside. It seemed Reiji properly understood that what he held in his hand was dangerous, and that it was something that ‘wrapped up those around him,’ as he was making a somewhat tired expression and let out a heavy sigh.

“... I got a headache.”

“It’ll be fine as long as you don’t use it the wrong way right?”

“I get that, but you know...”

He was unable to wipe away his anxiety. However since it was none other

than Reiji, Suimei thought it was certain that he wouldn't use it the wrong way. Just like how he agreed to take on the demon subjugation, he was a straightforward person who would take action for the sake of others. Besides—

“Being able to use that thing is one of your objectives right now too.”

“About the demons huh.”

“Yeah. The fighting from here should be harder than it was before. No matter what you say, that guy is there after all. That's why, that thing may be just about right.”

Against the large scaled armies of the demons, the power of the Sacrament would be quite useful. With its power, it is said that it could take control of an entire region, in substance it was an item in which there would be no exaggeration in calling it a strategic weapon. It was pretty much ideal for facing off against large armies. However, what Reiji reacted to was something else that Suimei inadvertently said.

“Suimei, by that guy, you mean the demon you were talking to?”

“Hm? Aah, yeah. Kudrack... No, he said he was called Lishbaum here huh.”

“Un, that's how he named himself. If I remember right he also said Suimei defeated him before. That true?”

Hearing Reiji's question, Suimei closed his eyes like he was remembering the events of the past, and eventually began speaking with a meek expression.

“—That's right. I destroyed him. I reduced his stock of lives, hit points, and denied the eternity of the ending world he thrust before us. I even erased his bond to the world. And yet, he's alive. Even to the point of taking on that form.”

“That form... You mean, he was originally human right?”

“As a foundation, yeah. From a human, he became a magician, after that a lich, and now after god knows what happened, he's become that form with bad taste.”

“Is he... no, he is strong huh. How do I put it, I didn't sense any tremendous power or spirit, but he did casually pull off that feat too.”

By that feat, he meant how Lishbaum's Phase Severance severed the heads of

the soldiers and the whole mountain behind them. The fact that he could do such a thing like he was just breathing, was probably leaving Reiji with outrageous apprehensions.

“Even in the other world, that guy was said to be completely out of control. After cooperating with my companions in our world, we finally brought him down.”

“The Demon Lord, an army of demons, the powerful man eater and an undying magician, huh...”

“Uwaaah, when you said it like that I feel like throwing it all away and going home.”

“Eh...”

As Suimei made a face like he was fed up with it, Reiji suddenly became somewhat worried. So he was worried. Seeing that his complexion changed, Suimei struck his shoulder and smiled.

“Don’t make that kind of face man, it’s a joke. A joke. I’ll also fight properly. I can’t just go and leave someone else to clean up after me when it comes to that guy after all.”

“R-really? Like really really?”

“Yeah.”

As Suimei returned a firm nod, Reiji’s complexion became noticeably brighter.

“What?”

“Ah, un, no, if Suimei is going to help out I feel like we have the strength of hundreds now.”

“Bu! What the hell are you saying...? Aren’t you thinking too optimistically?”

Reiji turned to Suimei with his trademark people loving smile. Seeing that far too carefree and radiant display, Suimei suddenly lost his composure unintentionally, but he immediately regained it and took caution. However, the person himself was quite an airhead, and looked at him curiously.

“Is that so?”

“It is! Even if it isn’t, there’s those Universal Apostle guys too you know?”

“Those people, are the ones who came to help us right?”

“They are, but... Just what are they thinking?”

Last time they were hostile, this time they were allies, they had no consistency in their battles. When Suimei defeated the demon general together with Eanru, he requested to cooperate. Jillbert went to reinforce Reiji and the others who fell victim to the demons’ surprise attack. Sister Clarissa saved Lefille and brought her back to the military encampment. And then, after everything ended, without exchanging any words, they all vanished like smoke.

“In the end, we missed the chance to ask about Elliot.”

“We’re not necessarily sure that Duke Hadorious is a Universal Apostle though.”

“You’re right. Well, we’ll end up finding out soon anyways right?”

From here, they were planning to go to Kurant City to save him. Eventually it was something they would be able to determine whether they wanted to or not. In any case, what they had to do next was already determined. All that was left was to take action. And just as he was confirming that their destination was in fact certain, Reiji suddenly showed Suimei a serious expression.

“About that, it doesn’t seem we’ll be able to head there right away on our end.”

“Ha? Why?”

“They said we can’t skip out on making a triumphant return to the Imperial Capital. His Highness Reanat insisted we do so no matter what... Besides in this kind of situation, I also think its necessary.”

“Aaaah, in the end they want to forcibly claim victory huh. I get that they don’t want to report back that they lost, but...”

“It’s just as Suimei said before the fighting began. Famous people are meant to be used for propaganda.”

He already knew this, but Reiji’s mental state during this case was complex. He likely didn’t have any reservations about being used, but in this situation

where it was hard to say they won and then having to pretend they did, he likely held on to apprehensions about it.

“... I think Suimei will get back first, but I want you to wait a bit before going to save Elliot. Tia would also like you wait. It’s a noble from her own country, so I feel like she wants to take care of it properly on her own too.”

“Tia’s so serious after all~.”

As Suimei spoke in a stupid tone, he gave off his impression of her. With her personality, she wouldn’t be satisfied unless she faced him herself. Because of that serious attitude of hers, Suimei had to go through a horrible experience too.

“Felmenia will be with you, but I guess she’ll be troubled unless she isn’t there herself.”

“The other party has quite the high social standing after all. From a position standpoint Menia is below him, and not bringing along someone of a higher position than him won’t really fly I guess.”

“... The person in question is planning to do something entirely by force though.”

“Uwa, scary. Don’t you think that little princess will immediately draw her swords on him or something? No matter how you put it, isn’t that far too militaristic?”

“Hahaha... But, even so, I think that’s one of Tia’s good points you know?”

“That’s a good point...?”

As Reiji reflexively followed up, Suimei was left stumped. As always, his friend’s good nature was aggravating. With that, they put an end to their talks of saving Elliot, and noticed that the entrance to the encampment had gotten rather noisy. Hearing this, Suimei curiously raised his voice.

“What’s that?”

“Looks like people are gathering. Is it additional reinforcements?”

“With this timing? Even though everything is already over?”

“But doesn’t it kinda feel like it? I sense a whole lot more people there.”

“Sense you say...”

His words were somewhat unreliable, but when Reiji said it there was a certain sense of credibility. Suimei let his suspicious feeling show on his face at that phrasing. Perhaps Reiji was finally beginning to show that he had entered the realm of the extraordinary, but—setting that aside.

Suimei and Reiji went to verify what was going on and headed towards the entrance of the military encampment. Passing by the soldiers who were restlessly working and a spot where goods were piled up like a pyramid, they eventually found Felmenia’s figure.

“Ooooi, Menia. What’s going on?”

“Ah, Suimei-dono. It is reinforcements. And it’s a whole lot of them. A whole lot.”

Felmenia turned around with a bright smile as she replied. Since this was still technically the front line, it was joyous for reinforcements to arrive. And then, Reiji seemed to have noticed something as he gazed towards the reinforcements.

“Those people aren’t Imperial soldiers huh.”

“Hm? Now that you mentions it, yeah you’re right. Actually, that uniform looks kinda familiar...”

Suimei had a sense of deja vu seeing the soldiers who came as reinforcements. There were many mages among the Imperial soldiers. Fundamentally, so that they could employ skirmisher tactics, their units were equipped very lightly. But the reinforcements that came were wearing solidly built armour and those equipped with swords were in the majority. The ratio of mages was decisively small. And it was a uniform he had seen before. That was because it was something he was stuck looking at quite a bit before returning to the Empire.

“Yes. They came through the hick area of the Empire to the north—”

As Felmenia was in such good spirits, she unintentionally said something quite

rude, and a certain figure came out of the formation of soldiers. Suimei spotted long and beautiful golden hair, and a girl's school uniform with a long katana and a red gauntlet. And the one who stood before Suimei, was that person that he knew very well. It was his childhood friend, and also the swordswoman who was summoned to this world by the hero summoning ritual, Kuchiba Hatsumi.

“Suimei, you been doing well?”

Coming out of the group of soldiers like it was natural, and with a gentleness that seemed to have absolutely nothing to do with violence, Hatsumi cheerfully called out to him. Suimei didn't expect to see her there at all, and let out his sudden surprise.

“You, Hatsumi!? Why are you here?”

“Why you say, isn't it obvious I came with the reinforcements...? Though it looks like they're not needed.”

Saying that, Hatsumi took a look around. Despite coming a long distance from the Alliance, she probably didn't expect the Imperial army to be in the cleanup phase and she shrugged her shoulder at the anticlimax.

“Or rather, is it fine over in the Alliance? Aren't there still demons in the northern part of the Alliance?”

“About that, they just suddenly pulled back. Just what are they thinking I wonder? But with that I was able to come over here though.”

“Then what about your companions?”

“Weitzer and Gaius are watching the house. The only ones that came are me and Selphy.”

After she said that, the half elf lady who had been standing behind her pulled down her hood and smiled. As Suimei had a low resistance to the smiles of older women, he was flustered for an instant at her beautiful smile. And Hatsumi and Felmenia both did not overlook that instant. And the both of them poked at his sides. In any case, as it was the first meeting between Hatsumi and Reiji—

“So you are Shana-san? This would be our first time meeting like this right?”

I'm Suimei's childhood friend, Kuchiba Hatsumi."

"It's nice to meet you, I've heard a lot about you from Suimei."

As Reiji replied cheerfully, Hatsumi showed a slightly impish expression.

"I've also heard all sorts of things you know? You said something amazing cause the other countries weren't putting out reinforcements."

—If you're not going to send support or reinforcements, I won't come to save you.

Suimei recalled the declaration Reiji sent out. Hearing that, Reiji panicked a little and brought out the true culprit's name in a hollow voice.

"Th-that, Suimei you see..."

Reiji awkwardly moved his gaze over to Suimei. And as he did, Hatsumi showed an expression like she was convinced, and let out a sigh in exasperation.

"So it was that after all... I thought so. Suimei's about the only one who could come up something so evil."

"Oi, what do you think I am?"

"Someone who looks completely harmless but on the inside is a total super villain right?"

"Ah, un. You're right."

Reiji reflexively agreed with Hatsumi's statement in the blink of an eye. And then, Selphy who was behind Hatsumi and Felmenia who was next to Suimei seemed to be unable to endure it, and burst into laughter. After that settled down, Selphy, who seemed to have come as Hatsumi's aid, humbly greeted Reiji. And then...

"In truth we planned on arriving somewhat earlier, but there was a slight obstruction on the way."

"An obstruction?"

"Yes. At first we thought that someone on the demons' side marked us, but..."

Selphy made a grim face. Seeing that the demons had already retreated, she

wasn't fully convinced herself. In the first place, it was because the demons retreated from the northern Alliance that they were able to come here. If the demons wanted to stall them, then they wouldn't have retreated in the first place. There may have been something else. While they were thinking of that, Hatsumi turned to Selphy and spoke up.

"We ended up visiting for no reason, but what should we do?"

"That's true isn't it. If there isn't anything in particular to do, creating a debt of gratitude from the Empire and forcing them to recognize their mistake would be an excellent plan here right? Fufufu."

While making a creepy smile, the half elf suggested some malicious political manoeuvring. And while she was, Suimei tapped Hatsumi's shoulder.

"Well if you have nothing to do, I've got a little request."

"What? If it's some sinister conspiracy I'm not doing it you know?"

"That's not it dammit. We're properly going to go save someone."

"Eh...?"

Hearing those words, Hatsumi showed a clearly bewildered face. And seeing her like that, Suimei knit his brows.

"What is it this time?"

"But Suimei just said saving someone from your very own mouth, it's a little refreshing."

After Hatsumi said that, Reiji also chimed in.

"You're certainly right huh. He's the type to always act like he doesn't want to and somehow or other ends up sticking his neck in anyways, he's a tsundere too."

"... Dammit you guys..."

While watching Reiji nod repeatedly, Suimei dropped his shoulders like he was tired. On that day, Suimei was thoroughly worn out by all sorts of things.



After talking to Reiji and reuniting with Hatsumi, Suimei departed from the

battlefield in the northern Empire and returned to his base in the Imperial Capital.

Originally, after returning, they were planning to immediately go and rescue Elliot, but at Reiji and Titania's request, they were now waiting until Reiji returned and ended up reporting to Christa to wait a while longer—and now it was a matter of deciding what to do in the meantime. Felmenia and Liliana were making use of their connections to gather information. As for Suimei, there was only one thing to do—

“Ummmm, putting the transcribed magic circle here, and disassembling that diagram...”

And what that was, was the major goal that he left the Royal Castle Camellia for in the first place, the analysis of the hero summoning circle and the creation of the magic circle to return... However, it wasn't like the development of the spell and magic circle were proceeding smoothly. Yes, at present, progress had come to a standstill.

“This part goes like this, change that equation with liturgy... Aah I see, that won't work huh...”

Taking the information he had gathered on many pieces of parchment on his desk, he lined them up on the floor as he moved them around while muttering ‘wrong wrong wrong’ and groaning. His work had hit a complete deadlock.

“It'll be bad if I don't go back there quickly right...? I can't just get stuck after coming all this way...”

Suimei spoke in a frankly impatient voice. However, the reason that Suimei was in such a rush was none other than the fact that the situation wasn't good at all. After defeating the demon general and reducing the number of demons, conversely, the number of enemies ended up increasing. Moreover, they were nothing but formidable opponents. In addition to the mirage man, there was Lishbaum, one of the Ten who Fell to Greed, Kudrack the Ghost Hide. Both of them were magicians who staved off Suimei, it was impossible to avoid a difficult battle. Since the mirage man's position was still a blur, he couldn't be sure about him, but Kudrack was someone that he absolutely had to settle the score with. The situation had definitely deteriorated to the point where he

couldn't be content with the status quo.

As long as Kudrack was there, there was no mistaking that he would stand in Suimei's way. They had that much of a fate between them. And if at that time, Suimei was the same as he was now, it was certain that Suimei would be defeated by him.

It was also true that his companions from his world weren't with him, but currently, Suimei was in a situation where he couldn't bring out his full strength the way he wanted to. Between this world and his own, the existence of the stars, the existence of spirits, the distortion of space, the soul vein, due to the differences in the conditions related to those elements, he couldn't bring out his power to its full extent. Even Suimei's Enth Astrarle was only a mere shell of its actual self because the stars the magic interacted with weren't there, he couldn't even bring out half of its actual power.

And Enth Astrarle was just the tip of the brush. Psychic Tempest, the supreme fist Lag Line Bells, the cursed Stella Maris, and the infinite conversion of the mana furnace. There was still plenty that he needed that he couldn't use.

He didn't know if he would become able to pull them all out at full strength after returning to his world. However, over in that world, there were guides he could rely on who peeked into the abyss of magic that he wouldn't be able to find in this one. If he asked them to teach him, he would likely be able to find a clue to solving the problem or at least find an alternate power he could use.

“... It doesn't really sit well with me to have to rely on others though.”

For a first rate magician, it was only natural for them to resolve a problem that was thrown at them all on their own. However, he didn't have the leisure to do so. The situation had become just that much more pressing than he thought it would. If he took his time, it was very likely that let alone Reiji, all the people of this world would end up being annihilated by Lishbaum. In any case, before he could resolve any of that, his first priority was doing something about the spell to return to his own world—

“Just what do I do about this...”

At hand, he had the data of the magic circle used to summon them to the Astel Kingdom and the original and oldest version he found in the northern

Alliance. Using those, he matched up his knowledge of the summoning spells left behind in this world along with his own knowledge of spiritualism, and was drawing up a magic circle to return, but—

(Just one more, I'm missing just one more thing.)

Seeing the puzzle before him which was missing the essential piece, Suimei bit down on his teeth. He started to unintentionally tap his foot on the ground in irritation, and he was beginning to reach the limits of his frustration. All that he was missing was the mental image. The form that seized their field of vision of the manifested magic. Would it be a warp? An opening door? A drilled hole? Or maybe it was just teleportation? Unable to grapple the form of that information, he was unable to firm up that last piece.

Naturally, if he forcefully activated the magic like it was, it would definitely fail. Without a form, it was nothing but an empty theory. As long as he couldn't imagine the shape, an unknown component would be added in, and the spell would become unstable and end in a critical failure. If it did, it wasn't hard to imagine what would happen. Just like that experiment in Philadelphia, the phenomena and events would contort and cause a rebound air, and all the calamity would befall Suimei's own body.

—An incomplete magic was the same as Pandora's box.

These were the admonishing words the leader of the Society, Nestahaim, gave him a while ago. Suimei had a tendency to take a bet on a long shot when he was in a disadvantageous situation. Even in the fight against Eanru, he sought to use the 'Infinite Light Without End.' Because he would take on such big gambles, he was told this. They were words given to him because he would seek out the hope of the mysteries of magic, used power that was beyond his means, and ended up receiving a calamity with his own body.

In that case, in the current state where he was able to judge right from wrong calmly, there was no way he would make a move. However, as long as the current problem wasn't solved, it was like he was inside a dark tunnel where he couldn't see the light at the end.

“Aaaaah I can't think of anything good! Everything is this damn heat's fault...”

What was disturbing Suimei's thought process wasn't only the problem at

hand, there was also the weather. In the northern Empire, despite being only the early summer, a seething heat had rolled in. Especially after just coming down from the mountain region, it could also be said that the effect was simply increased by the difference in temperature. But even so, it was remarkably annoying that the temperature was suddenly around thirty degrees. While Suimei was in agony over the heat, a voice suddenly called out to him from outside his room.

“Suimei-donooo, is now a good time?”

“Aah, Menia huh? Come on in, what’s up?”

As Suimei called back out to Felmenia, she quietly opened the door.

“Excuse me—So how is it going? Have you been able to make progress with the creation of the magic circle?”

“Not at all. I’m blocked. It’s a dead end.”

“A-ahaha...”

As Suimei dropped his shoulders as if personifying the current situation, Felmenia began leaking a troubled laugh like she didn’t know what to say about that.

“The answer to the spell won’t come out, and the liturgy is hard so it just isn’t working. Also the concept, that flash of lightning or that mental image just doesn’t come up...”

“I understand that it is difficult. Even in this world I do not think anyone has managed to create a magic circle to return after all... By the way, what manner of thing is this ‘image’ in the case of a summoning?”

“It’s kind of like the thing that draws in the foundation. A vacuum... Or you won’t get it with that. Using an image from this world, it would be like creating a powerful current with wind magic which forcefully pulls on something.”

“Then how about the image opposite of that?”

“No, that won’t do. In the case of sucking air the arrival point is stable. When air is being pushed out it goes all over the place and the arrival point will become messed up. In that case we won’t be able to return to the correct

location.”

“Fuumuuu. Then how about a tunnel from this world to that one?”

“In that case I feel like it’ll get clogged up... Shit, like I thought, the vacuum is the neck isn’t it...”

Remembering back to when he was summoned over, the form used as reference for the hero summoning circle felt like that of a vacuum which gathered things, and that was the source of Suimei’s worries. Once he thought that way, it was difficult for him to rid himself of that thought, which was causing him great pains.

Suimei let out a grand sigh. And while he was letting off a gloomy atmosphere, Felmenia clapped her hands as a delightful sound rang through the room.

“By the way, Suimei-dono, how about a change of mood? If you clear away those gloomy feelings, you may be able to hit on a good idea right?”

“A change of mood huh. You certainly have a point... But, what will we do?”

“Fufufu... Regarding that, I have a plan.”

“... H-haa. So, what is it?”

As Felmenia was making a somewhat creepy expression, Suimei looked at her suspiciously. On the other hand, it seemed Felmenia was making such a creepy smile on purpose, and in a complete change, she changed it to a bright and lively one. And then, the first thing to come out of her mouth—

“The change of mood that I’d like to recommend to Suimei-dono, is the pool!!”

“Ha...?”

And thus, Felmenia Stingray announced the sudden opening of the pool for the summer season.



At the completely unexpected word that came out of Felmenia’s mouth, Suimei stiffened up for an instant, and then immediately regained himself and

reacted.

“No, um, the pool, by that, you mean, THE POOL!? That one!? The one where you take classes at school during the summer and go to have fun with your family, that one!?”

“That’s right! Before we left the northern military encampment I heard about it from Io Kuzami-dono! In Suimei-dono’s world, to stave off the heat of the summer, everyone intentionally goes into enormous containers of water to cool off their hot bodies together!”

“Please don’t speak about the greatest leisure activity of the summer in such a tasteless way...”

Hearing Felmenia’s blunt speech, Suimei felt like he couldn’t say anything back. He certainly would like to cool down his body, but the way she put it was like jumping into a freezing pond after staying in a sauna.

“In spite it being the early summer we have this oppressing heat over us too, how about it?”

“How about it you say... In the first place, just where are you going to find that kind of thing?”

“If we go outside you’ll figure it out. Alright, let’s go!”

Saying that, Felmenia pulled on Suimei’s arm in high spirits. With a cheerful and charming smile, she was like a small child roughly dragging along her parent. It was quite cute. Even though Suimei couldn’t see where the situation was going, he quietly let her drag him along, and when they went outside—

“HAAAAAAAAAAH!”

“TEAAAAAAAAAH!”

A sword and katana were colliding. And swordswomen were letting out their war cries.

“...”

On the other side of the open door, was incessantly repeating slashes. Seeing the completely unexpected scene right before his eyes, Suimei stood stock still completely dumbfounded. What was happening outside the entrance was

obviously a bout of swords. Because Suimei's room was soundproofed, he couldn't hear them, but the culprits behind those war cries were Lefille and Hatsumi. As both of them were well acquainted with the path of swords, it was an of unavoidable battle.

On one side, was an enormous sword, on the other, a long katana. They were both weapons that seemed unsuitable for girls, but when the two of them took hold of them it looked outrageously natural, and it didn't feel out of place. Also, there was no deficiencies in the way they handled them. Therefore, if one carelessly stood between them, it was guaranteed that they would be turned into minced meat. Yes, this was definitely the overflowing and violent sounds of a collision between steel and fighting spirit, a garden of carnage. The scene of dipping into cold water which reminded one of summer couldn't be found no matter where he looked.

"... The pool was just an illusion huh. All I see is something super dangerous. Like swords, and swords, and swords, and swords."

"That's wrong Suimei-dono! You're being too hasty! Lefille and Hatsumi-sama are just having a bout, the pool is somewhere else!"

As Suimei plainly dropped his shoulders and began grumbling in a tired voice, Felmenia emphasized that the pool did in fact exist. In any case, the bout in the open space in front of the house using real swords continued.

Lefille took a stance with her large sword above her head, and in response, Hatsumi lowered her long katana to the ground. Before long, without making any signs to each other, they moved, and the entrance was once more filled with the scene of intersected blades.

"HAH!"

"SEI!"

Remarkably loud metallic clangs rang out as sword and katana met. On one side, Hatsumi made sure she wouldn't be hit with her katana, on the other, Lefille was trying to create an opening by striking that katana with her sword. And Lefille seemed to have won that conflict, as Hatsumi's katana took an unthinkable trajectory and was turned away. However, Hatsumi was shrewd. She wasn't the daughter of the fourth seat of the Sword of Swords just for

show. From that averted trajectory, she made a beautiful movement in and instant to correct her stance—

“Hm, then how about this?”

“The katana...”

The sword strikes started back up once more. However, though the sound of metal clashing had been ringing out up until now, Lefille’s sword was now missing its mark. She could see the katana with her eyes, it should have been there, but even when she tried to strike it with her large sword, she couldn’t hit it at all.

“So this is your sword technique?”

“Well yeah.”

As Lefille racked her brains and contorted her face, Hatsumi replied with a bold smile. The reason the swords looked to be crossing each other but were never striking each other was because of the technique of the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani. Just like the name phantom sword implied, it became a bewitching blade. If one relied on their sight, they would be misled, and would end up only concentrating on where the blade was going, simply put, they were caught by the truths or falsehoods of the technique. For a swordswoman of Lefille’s calibre, it was something she could deal with without a problem, but—

(That Lefi can’t catch up with those sword strikes?)

Suimei found it surprising that Lefille was being led around by the nose by Hatsumi. Hatsumi’s abilities were also quite high, so it wasn’t like it was impossible, but with Lefille’s level of skill, she should have been able to put up more of a fight.

—No, even if Hatsumi was pretending, she was still holding back one firm hand to play, so she may have been just that outrageous. However, it still seemed very unlike Lefille, and Hatsumi suddenly announced the end of their bout.

“... Lefille-san. Let’s call it a day with that.”

“... Yeah.”

Despite having the end marked while being in a disadvantageous position, Lefille quietly accept it. Normally it would be a scene where she clung on, but for her not to say anything must have meant she was thinking of something. Putting her sword away, she shut her eyes. And then, Hatsumi spoke in an apologetic tone.

“Sorry. It just felt unmotivated.”

“Is that so? I think Hatsumi-jou’s fighting spirit was overflowing though...”

“It may be a bit rude, but, I was talking about Lefille’s side, right?”

“...”

Having that pointed out to her, Lefille became somewhat despondent and shut her eyes. She must have thought so too. And seeing her like that, Hatsumi began speaking while choosing reserved words.

“I can’t say it for sure, but Lefille-san, I feel like you’re being impatient.”

“Impatient... is it?”

“It’s like your emotions are taking the lead. That kind of impression. Of course, I’m not criticizing your sword strikes or power, but in that fight just now, Lefille-san wasn’t looking at me.”

“That’s... My apologies. Even though it was our long awaited bout, my sword was clouded.”

Her sword was clouded. The sword was like a mirror which reflected a swordsman’s heart. If they had worries, it’s tip wouldn’t settle down, and if they had sorrow, it wouldn’t go forward. If they were impatient, their emotions would run ahead of their sword, and the sword would become insubstantial. As Suimei thought, the main cause of that would be the fact that she was forced to taste a cruel defeat in the battle against the demons in the Empire.



“Are you alright? Like I thought, about what happened before.”

“... I know. I know, but, after all...”

“Lefi...”

“I couldn’t win against that guy. I thought I had gotten stronger since then, but after taking a look inside it ended up like that...”

As Lefille leaked out her vexation, she suddenly realized something and raised her voice in a fluster while vigorously shaking her head.

“—No, sorry! I can’t make a face like that!”

Attempting to shake away her gloomy mood, Lefille put on a smile. However, in the end it was nothing but bravado. Wiping away such a gloomy feelings wasn’t something that could be done so halfheartedly. The frustration of defeat was something that could really only be settled by devoting oneself to their art and attaining victory. Felmenia then clapped her hands together loudly to get everybody’s attention.

“That’s it! Lefille should also join us in some recreation! Letting it out is something that brings good ideas to the surface!”

“Felmenia-jou, but you know...”

“It cannot be helped that it is on your mind. Besides, do we not have people that we can rely on all around us? It may unexpectedly work out. I mean, this time it somehow worked out for me too.”

Those were likely words that came out because she was previously frustrated at her lack of power. However, the trigger for her becoming stronger was her progression from a mage to a magician, so she accomplished it by jumping over one or two steps.

A good idea may come to mind. When one wants to become stronger, they become stronger. As Felmenia tried to blow away those gloomy feelings with such thoughts, Lefille showed a somewhat lonely expression.

“You’re right. For only you to become suddenly stronger like that, I feel like Felmenia-jou somehow stole a march on me.”

“Eh, no, umm...”

If she said it like that, then even Felmenia would feel perplexed. Being caught up in the moment, she felt like she ended up hurting Lefille’s feelings and was in

a complete fluster. Lefille then made a complete change and let out a strange laugh.

“It’s a joke. As usual Felmenia-jou has quite the cute reactions.”

“AAAAAAAAAAAH! You tricked me!!”

As Felmenia yelled out while stomping on the ground, Lefille once more let out a laugh. And even then, Suimei felt like he could see her eyes sway with sorrow, or maybe it was just his imagination. As she was offended more than was expected, Lefille began to soothe Felmenia, and Selphy, who had been watching the bout, suddenly made a serious expression and cut into their conversation.

“As I thought, White Flame-dono became strong right?”

“Eh? Yes, well. More than before, but...”

Felmenia spoke like she didn’t have confidence in the fact, but Selphy didn’t see it that way. She likely felt it from the atmosphere she gave off as a mage. And as expected, while still speaking in a serious tone...

“No. Right now, I can tell that White Flame-dono is one or two levels higher than before. You have gained something... No, you have arrived at a new stage have you not?”

“Just from rewriting some of the functions of my body a little, my output has increased. More important than that, strength is something that follows afterwards, or how do I put it...”

While Felmenia was finding it difficult to express, Lefille questioned her.

“Fumu. Felmenia-jou If all that happened is that the things you can do have increased, does that mean you’ve only become more skillful?”

“No, to mages and magicians, that does apply to mana, but to bring about a large result, the output is essential. From the beginning I possessed a lot of mana, but to bring about results the output was far too sluggish, so having taken measures to resolve that, other things on the surface were improved.”

“Fumu... Lily. How does it look to you?”

Looking to the side, Lefille called out to Liliana who had been sitting on a chair

in the open space while playing with the cats. Letting down the cat that was on top her lap, she came tottering over. She likely heard what they were talking about, and without asking about the details behind that question, she immediately answered.

“Yes. As expected, to become able to produce grand results, is something important to a mage... a magician.”

“Is it something that can be changed so easily?”

“Felmenia is skilled, but the speed that she memorizes things at, is fast. Saying it out loud, it would be the power to cope, and adapt. For me, I was only able to use, dark magic, so I always think of things, using that as a foundation and the spells end up closely resembling, what I used before. But in Felmenia’s case, I think, she can widen the arsenal, at her disposal just by thinking she wants to do it.”

She was likely right. Up until now, she was limited by her output and mana capacity, but now that the limit was removed, she was able to easily manipulate the power of various elements. And as proof of that...

“You’ve already perfected all eight attributes right?”

“Yes. I’ve learned to call out to the elements with a different approach, so I can use them all as I please.”

“So White Flame-dono is able to master all of the attributes!?”

“Yes, well, that’s how it is.”

“I see, so that means you’re already rivalling the power of the heroes of salvation right...?”

And with a surprised voice which was close to admiration, Felmenia was humbled. Seeing her like that, Suimei spoke up to Selphy.

“Aaah, don’t praise her too much.”

“I-I’m not really getting carried away or anything!”

“With that face you don’t have any persuasive power though...”

As if she was completely getting carried away, Felmenia’s face was all smiles.

She was extremely happy at being praised. That part of her hadn't really changed much since they were in Camellia. And after being looked at like that, Felmenia hid her embarrassment by completely changing the topic.

"M-more importantly than that! The pool!"

The first to react to that word, was Hatsumi.

"Now that you mention it, the plan was for everyone to go in after we were done huh."

"You all knew?"

"Only the shut in didn't know."

"Ugu..."

As Hatsumi gave him a sidelong glance with a smile, Suimei faltered. With that, he didn't know if it was good or bad that she got her memories back and was able to have these amiable exchanges again. Naturally it was good, but he couldn't deny that it was vexing. In any case...

"Then, I will show you the pool! Everyone! Please look over there!"

Following Felmenia's instructions, everyone present looked in the direction she was pointing to. In a corner of the alleyway's entrance was an ostentatiously large piece of cloth.

"That's?"

"That's right! The pool! Then, I will take off the cloth!"

Matching up with Felmenia's spirited yell, Liliana let out an indifferent 'Ooou.' Before long, Felmenia invoked magic to create a gust of wind and rolled away the cloth neatly into a bundle. And what was revealed, was a water tank made of stone large enough to monopolize an entire corner of the open space and was installed in such a way that it looked to sink into the ground.

"You really went a made a damn pool... And what's with the size?"

"I was told the bigger the better."

On top of that, it seemed reasonably deep. It was likely that with Liliana's height, her face wouldn't come out of the water.

“But, how did you make this?”

“Isn’t it easy if you use magic? Borrowing some materials from those walls and using magic to drill the ground...”

“... That’s, kinda bad isn’t it?”

“It’s fine if nobody finds out. It’s alright. I didn’t take so much that the buildings will crumble, to put it in the words of Suimei-dono’s world, everything is OK.”

Was it really fine? Well, from Suimei’s perspective he didn’t really care as long as it didn’t turn into something troublesome. But, there was a different problem.

“Even if you have a pool, if we don’t have swimsuits then there’s no point?”

It couldn’t be that they were planning on going in naked. As Suimei imagined that scene, his heart began to pound a bit, but obviously that wasn’t going to happen.

“No problem. While Suimei was being a shut in, we all went to buy some after all.”

“Ha!? They sell swimsuits in this world!?”

“Un. Seems it’s only something they do in the Empire. I mean, this country has a bathing culture, so don’t the people here like to bath in cold water too? Look.”

Hatsumi pulled up a girl’s swimsuit. Compared to the other world, the materials weren’t very good, and it also had a shape that seemed to be nonsensical functionality wise, but it did in fact look like a swimsuit. However—

“I don’t have one though?”

Suimei didn’t go shopping with them, so he didn’t have a swimsuit... Or so he thought, and having properly followed up on that front, Liliana opened up the bag she was holding and showed it to him.

“We didn’t know, what Suimei would want, so we bought, several kinds.”

“Ah, thanks for going out of your way... I mean, you’re already completely prepared!?”

“Of course, we are.”

Saying that, Liliana stuck out her chest with an ‘ehen.’ It was what one would expect of her to buy all sorts to cover for any errors.

“With this, everyone can go in right?”

“Then let’s get changed and get in right away.”

Following after Felmenia, Hatsumi raised up a paper bag. Unexpectedly, her footsteps were light and she seemed to be in high spirits. And during that, Selphy suddenly spoke up.

“Though it is a rare opportunity, I will refrain.”

“Eh? Selphy doesn’t want to go in? Why?”

“Yes. As long as the kitty cats are here I don’t need anything else.”

It seemed the half elf lady was already entranced by the cats. She likely treasured her time with the cats more than wanting to go in the pool. Calling out to the one who they had completely won over, the cats let out a meow. Since the beginning, all the cats were silently gathered around her. Due to her specialty in magic, her surroundings were always cool, so the cats were escaping the heat by gathering around her. It was a win win relationship. Fundamentally, Suimei was usually the one who made such preparations, so it became a little easier for him.

Hearing that Selphy was perfectly content with the cats, Liliana nodded her head repeatedly. As fellow cat lovers, they understood each other well.

“Then, let’s get ready!”

At Felmenia’s excessively energetic command, the Yakagi residence in the Imperial Capital became a dressing room.



Everybody present seemed to be fairly excited about getting into the pool, and after they all got changed in a flash, they were all lined up in front of Felmenia’s self made pool.

In order from right to left, Felmenia was wearing something like a bikini, the type where the upper and lower portions were split. It was a swimsuit which

emphasized the portions of her body that stuck out.

Lefille was also wearing a separated bikini styled swimsuit, but to put it in the way of the other world, it was a sporty type. And perhaps because she was going into water, her usual ponytail was let down.

Hatsumi was dressed like she was fully enjoying a private beach in a southern country, and had a decorative flower in her hair and was wearing something like a pareo. Her choice was somewhat more elegant.

Liliana was wearing a cute swimsuit with frills, and he didn't know where she found it, but she had something like a swimming cap on. Of course, as she had let down her twin tails, this was a rare occasion where she had her hair straight down. And what stood out the most about her, was the donut float made of leather squeezing around her waist.

“Liliana, that.”

Wearing trunks with a strange pattern on it, Suimei pointed to the float, and Liliana averted her eyes.

“I'm, um, swimming isn't, really my specialty, so.”

“... So you can't swim.”

“I-I said it's just not my specialty!”

“If it's just not your specialty then you don't need the float right? You can at least swim right? Hm?”

“Th-this is just the necessary means of safety in case I need to evade a dangerous situation, there is absolutely no meaning beyond that!”

“Hooou.”

“It's true!!”

As Suimei looked like he didn't believe her at all, Liliana turned bright red and puffed up as she desperately denied it. Seeing their exchange from beginning to end, Hatsumi spoke up like she couldn't watch anymore.

“What are you picking on a small child for...”

“Aaaah, somehow, I just unintentionally, right?”

He was probably grinning too much, but he couldn't help it because it was cute.

"... Remember this later."

When he noticed, there was a black aura flickering behind Liliana. She was probably quite bitter about being unable to swim. As mana began to swell, Suimei's skin started to prickle a bit. This was psychic acid. The proof of the manifestation of Liliana's mana. Just from that little joke, she was completely ready to go to war. Seeing that, Hatsumi whispered to Suimei.

"Hey Suimei, at this rate won't you get cursed by Liliana-chan?"

"That's not funny, seriously..."

"But, you know..."

As he looked over to her, as expected, her surroundings were pitch black. It was a visual hallucination of a grudge that resembled dark mud, and while the two of them were trembling at the little girl's rage, Felmenia cut in.

"M-more importantly, our preparations are done, so let's go!"

Liliana was sulking, but setting that aside, the pool was now open. As expected, the girls seemed to have been looking forward to playing in the pool, and went into the pure white water tank however they pleased. Felmenia used magic to leap in. In complete contrast, Lefille and Hatsumi sat on its edge and lowered themselves in calmly. As for Liliana, perhaps because she knew that the base was quite deep, she timidly entered while making sure that her float was secured.

"Fuhaa! It feels nice to bathe in the water during the summer!"

"You're right. Once in a while this kind of thing is nice. It is all thanks to Felmenia-jou."

"I never thought I'd end up wearing a swimsuit and getting into a pool in another world."

"Like I thought, m-my feet, can't, reach..."

As each of them gave their impressions, they began to move around and get used to the water. Seeing them all go in, Suimei stuck his foot into the pool—

“Oh, it’s surprisingly cold huh...”

Precisely because of the heat, he thought the water would have been somewhat warm, but it was a much cooler temperature suitable to cooling down than he thought it would be and felt quite nice. When he looked closer, there was a magic circle drawn at the bottom of the pool, and he understood that it was responsible for maintaining the pool water’s temperature.

On top of that, the water filling up the large water tank was not rain water, but clean water created with magic. Because of that, unlike a regular pool, there was no need to add agents such as chlorine, and the water didn’t have a hint of any impurities and was perfectly clear. The surface of the water which was reflecting the sunlight was sparkling brightly.

It felt a lot better than he thought it would. Admiring Felmenia’s meticulousness as she had been prudent to add touches to even the finest details, Suimei took up a position at the edge of the pool, and began to use magic to create himself a seat. While he was doing so, the girls were passing time by swimming around or just floating there.

“How is it everyone! The pool that I made!”

“Aah, this is the best thing to get away from the summer heat. Honestly I was also quite annoyed with this heat. Thank you, Felmenia-jou.”

“As I thought, is this heat tough for you Lefille?”

“I was born and raised in Noshias after all. I’m not used to heat.”

“Fufufu... So it was the right choice to make the pool. Let’s make one every summer.”

As Felmenia made the determination to make the pool a standard feature of summer, Hatsumi turned to Suimei.

“So you can even make this kind of thing with magic huh. How convenient. Hey Suimei. When we go back why don’t you make one in the garden of the house.”

“I’m a magician, not a damn contractor.”

“How about Yakagi Public Works, or Yakagi Construction? If the family

business doesn't work out isn't it better to have a side job?"

"Just what do you think a lineage of magicians that have continued for generations is..."

They were having that exchange, but Suimei wasn't swimming. To Suimei, just the fact that the pool existed was in a sense, heaven... But, it seemed heaven had a poor affinity with magicians.

"Somehow, I feel out of place..."

Perhaps because he was the only guy present, or perhaps because he wasn't experienced in this kind of experience with girls, he felt that way. Though he said that, the reason he didn't leave was likely because inside, he was happy. He was a boy after all.

On top of that, everyone present was a beauty. Moreover, while they were chattering, swimming and jumping in the water, all sorts of things were swaying about, and he got to see all sorts of things when they bent over, to a boy it was the best scene to just look at. And Suimei had a monopoly over such a scene. If he said he was unable to endure it and left, the boys of the world would probably kill him in jealousy.

After looking once more, the girls who had all been enjoying themselves while swimming around were now starting to get excited about something else. For some reason, Felmenia was making an imposing stance at the edge of the water tank, and thrust her finger towards Lefille who rose out of the water's surface.

"Lefille, I challenge you to a fair match!"

"Fumu, a match with me?"

"That's right! In this water, it is a fight without swordswomen or magicians!"

Hearing that declaration, Lefille replied with a fearless smile like she accepted.

"Interesting, very well."

The two of them began creating a distance between them. Felmenia jumped into the pool from the edge and moved away, while Lefille started moving towards Suimei. As she pushed aside the water and arrived next to Suimei, he called out to her in a spiritless tone.

“Is that alright~?”

“If she has challenged me than there is no way I could refuse. Battles are the very livelihood of a swordswoman.”

“Livelihood you say... Rather, what are you guys planning on doing...?”

That was the main point of his suspicions. In the first place, he couldn't understand just what kind of match they were going to have inside a pool. In a pool, a match would normally involve swimming, but since they were distancing themselves from each other, it didn't look like they were going to race or anything.

“You hear me!? The winner is the last one standing and still has their upper half above the water's surface!”

“Aah, I got it.”

“Don't just get it! Why is it such a violent match!? Ain't that strange!?”

As the conversation rapidly advanced, Suimei didn't hesitate to throw in a quip at all. And then Felmenia and Lefille both made a curious expression as they looked at him.

“Suimei-dono, isn't a match just that kind of thing?”

“That's right isn't it? Just what are you saying? As someone who lives by fighting, Suimei-kun should also understand right? A fight is something that ends when there is only one person left standing.”

“No no no no! I don't get it! What do you mean by a fight!? Just what are you two trying to start!?”

As the atmosphere began to get more agitated, Suimei began to panic as he questioned them. As for the two girls...

“It is a fight that I cannot lose.”

“That's right. It's a fight with a woman's pride at stake.”

“Eeh...?”

Suimei's bewilderment and groaning didn't reach them. And without getting an answer as to exactly what kind of pride was at stake inside a pool, their preparations for battle had already finished, and they began to take action—

“Here I come...”

With no sign to signal the start, Felmenia began to amass mana. Ripples rose to the surface of the water, and before long a wave was born and the pool began undulating greatly. And as if acting in concert with that, Lefille also began to gather her own power.

“Oh spirits. Become my guardian—”

The shrine maiden called out to the red wind so that she could use the power of the spirits. The wind in the area turned deep crimson and began moving, and at the same time, the surface of the water was rippling due to the wind in opposition to Felmenia.

Right in the centre of the pool, the undulating waves crashed against on another. The waves broke and turned into a white splash as they scattered, and the air was filled with a sharp pressure. An atmosphere like a tempest was sweeping in over the open space on that sunny day.

—It would be bad to let them continue like that, it would completely waste the time to relax they finally had. While thinking of that, Suimei shifted his focus over to the two others who should have been on his side to stop such a barbaric act. However—

“Hey Liliana-chan, which side do you think will win?”

“Up until now, it would have been Lefille, but from what we were talking about earlier, about the mana furnace, Felmenia has also become quite strong. I also don’t know, which one will win...”

“...”

By the time he looked at them, it was too late. Rather, they were already analyzing the fight and were completely in the mood of spectating. There was already no more allies present who would help him stop the fight. There was one more nearby, but that one was rendered into a boneless mush by the cats, so she wouldn’t be any help. Having been quite cunning, she already retreated to a safe distance together with the cats without Suimei noticing.

And so, the battle between Felmenia and Lefille began. Perhaps because Felmenia began gathering her mana first, she took the first move. Gather the

mana within her hand, she skillfully twisted the water around it.

“Here I go! There!”

Along with a yell, she fired the water towards Lefille. The water current that had twisted into a vortex stretched out like a snake as it dove towards Lefille. On the other hand, Lefille used the power of the spirits to defend herself. The wave of water was obstructed by a wall of wind. However, the powers began struggling for supremacy. Perhaps it was because the current location was overbrimming with moisture and used the spark of mana to turn the situation into that inexplicable development.

“As usual it’s a completely inexplicable power huh...”

Felmenia’s attack was magic, so he at least understood the principle behind it. But the power Lefille used to oppose it was completely mysterious. He had already established that the source of her power was the power of spirits, her spells didn’t even have a ‘simple command,’ and let alone using it to attack she could even make a shield or as some sort of support. It’s absolute versatility in use left Suimei wide eyed, and on top of that it was extremely powerful. Even from a magician’s eyes, he had an irrepressible urge to lament that it was unfair and a cheat. However—

“HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

“Ku, that’s some strong pressure... So this is ‘increasing the output,’ huh....”

Even with the defensive wall made with the power of spirits, Felmenia’s spell seemed to be pushing her back, and Lefille quietly groaned. As expected, Felmenia’s skills weren’t to be made light of. As she once more got a sense of her true abilities, before long, it seemed the water spell had ended—and Lefille was able to splendidly endure it.

“As one would expect of Lefille. However, I still have more to go.”

“The interval between spells is short...”

“That’s right! I have accomplished a level up!”

“However, I won’t just stand on the back foot!!”

As Lefille fired out a gallant phrase, Suimei was wondering just what she was

planning to do. And while he was thinking of that, Suimei was suddenly grabbed by the nape of his neck—

“Gueh!”

And by the time he realized, he was making a weird sound like a crushed frog. That was because Lefille grabbed his neck, and thrust him out towards Felmenia.

“Fufu... It is unfortunate for you Felmenia-jou. I have Suimei-kun over on this side.”

“What do you mean on this side!? Oi! You’re just using me as a shield!”

Suimei struggled and squirmed around, but he was firmly gripped and he couldn’t get away. Whether it was pure strength or the favour of the spirits, Lefille had enough power to wield an enormous sword. Being able to grip the handle of a sword in one’s hand while manipulating it was critical to a swordswoman, so her grip strength was proportionate to that requirement.

“No, you’re not a shield, absolutely not.”

“Then what the hell am I!? A hostage!? Am I a hostage!?”

“You’re a reliable knight who protects me.”

“What kind of knight do you grip by the neck and thrust forward!?”

Before he was a knight or anything else, Suimei was a magician. In any case, speaking of Felmenia who was faced with this situation.

“Gumumu, what a cowardly act to use Suimei-dono...!”

It seemed to have an instantaneous effect on her, and she couldn’t make her move. She skillfully used magic to create a foot hold in the water and pressed against it as she was at a loss at what to do next. And then, completely perplexed by what to do, she began to use a psychological attack against Lefille.

“Lefille! Using that kind of hand, do you not find it embarrassing!?”

“A battle is something where you make use of whatever is at hand. Felmenia-jou, just as you used the pool’s water, all I did was use Suimei-kun.”

“Oi! You just said yourself that you’re using me! How is this a knight!? How!?”

Suimei was yelling, but his voice wasn't reaching her. She seemed to be completely ignoring him on purpose, and the figure of her whistling there was hateful.

"Ku... At this rate my hands are..."

Tied, and Felmenia started growling with a 'Gununugununu.' As Suimei felt somewhat touched by her kindness, a spray of water came in from another direction.

"Ei."

What he could hear, was a childish tone with little inflection. While Felmenia was completely unable to do anything, a ridiculously large wave came crashing in on them. And the one to do so, was Liliana, still clinging on to her float. Receiving an attack from an unexpected direction, Lefille and her shield, Suimei, were unable to put any techniques to use and took the attack full force.

"Upuu!"

"Buhaaaaaa! M-my nose! Water went up my nose!"

Lefille didn't take much damage, but since she used Suimei as a shield, he took the wave on directly and a whole lot of water flowed into his mouth and nose... Rather, it was like the wave of water was entirely aimed at Suimei.

"Geho! Goho! What the hell are you doing Liliana!?"

As Suimei yelled out, Liliana took on a nonchalant attitude.

"Suimei. I said before. To remember, it."

"So it's payback!? That's so cruel!"

"Revenge is with me. Victory can't be gained, by being moved by emotion, and holding back your hand."

Without mercy, Liliana thrust her finger forward and spoke like she was firing out a signature phrase. As for Lefille who was struck by the attack at the same time...

"Ku, even using Suimei-kun as a shield had no effect huh..."

"Oi, like I thought, you were using me as a shield huh!?"

“... Ah.”

As Lefille unintentionally let it slip, she once more began whistling. Seeing her like that, a vein popped out on Suimei’s brow, but...

“Lefi, you damn...”

“L-Lily! It’s payback! Haaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Ignoring Suimei’s anger, Lefille began creating a sphere of water above her palm. It must have been something accomplished with the power of the spirits. And seeing that sphere using the power of the spirits, Suimei’s face became stiff in surprise.

“Oioi, what’s with that skill...”

“Fufufu... Are you surprised Suimei-kun? This is something I worked out just for a time like this.”

—Just for what a time like what? Though Suimei wanted to make that quip, Lefille took on a pose like water polo player brandishing a ball before he could. The ball and Lefille’s hand were connected by some kind of current of power, and it completely looked like a plasma ball was being held aloft above her hand as it started to let off sparking sounds that were completely uncharacteristic of water. The colourless and transparent water gradually turned red, and then—

“Here I go, Felmenia-jou! Lily! Taste Ishaktney’s Red Ball with your body!!”

“WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAIIIT! If they get hit by that they won’t get off lightly!!”

What Lefille fired out, was without a doubt a killing technique. Influenced by the power of spirits, the water ball turned red. Seeing that impossible power right before his eyes, his panicked shriek rang in the air.

“Lily! Defence!”

“Under, stood!”

Before Lefille’s attack which seemed to be filled with the intent to kill, Felmenia and Liliana began to build a defensive formation together. Just where did the fair match in the pool go? Using magic, they put up a bulwark with full power, and awaited the attack’s arrival.

And before long—Ishaktney’s Red Ball or whatever that killing technique was called, collided with their powerful combined magic bulwark. As the powerful energies clashed with one another, perhaps because of the contrast with the intense light they were giving off as a result, the open space at the entrance to the Yakagi residence looked like it had darkened into night despite it being the afternoon, and sparks came pouring down. A fire atop water was exactly what it looked like. As the two intense powers competed ruthlessly against each other, a shadow suddenly swooped in.

“Sei!”

Along with a sharp yell of spirit, the water ball clashing against the defensive bulwark was cut clean in two. Just what happened? As the column of water settled down and the steam caused by mana dispersed, the identity of that shadow was revealed. And that was none other than Hatsumi, with her hand shaped like a blade thrust forward in a stance.

“Do you all plan on ignoring me and playing together? You can’t just do that right?”

“Mu! Even Hatsumi-jou is participating in the war... Three against two is cowardly!”

“Oi! Don’t just casually include me in this!”

As Suimei yelled out, Lefille made a truly dissatisfied expression.

“Muu, if you’re not here then I’ll be all alone won’t I?”

“It’s fine if you all just split up in teams among the people who wanna do it right!?”

In response to Lefille pouting with a sullen tone, Suimei shouted out without mercy. They were supposed to be relaxing, and yet it turned into a battle to the limits, frankly speaking he wanted to get away from it all. And then, Lefille suddenly thought of something and brought her face closer to Suimei.

“Wh-what is it?”

“... Then how about this?”

—Gyuuuu.

“Fu!”

In an instant, Lefille circled around to Suimei’s back, and embraced him from behind. Feeling a soft sensation hitting his back, Suimei unintentionally let out a weird voice stiffly. On the other hand, speaking of Felmenia and Hatsumi who watched that happen...

“AAH!”

“Wh-wh-wh-wh-wh-what are you doing Lefille!?”

With an expression like they couldn’t accept it at all, the two of them yelled out. Without paying them any mind, Lefille brought her mouth close to Suimei’s ear, and despite being a good spirit, she whispered to him like an evil one.

“How about it? Suimei-kun, you’re my ally right? Won’t you help me?”

“Ah, no, yes... Just a bit, I’ll try my best for just a bit I guess~, I’m starting to feel that way...”

“Un, as one would expect of Suimei-kun. I thought you would say so from the very beginning.”

Before the devil’s temptation, Suimei capitulated without resistance. Hearing those words, Lefille let go of him with satisfaction. And speaking of the ones who were watching that...

“How cowardly... It’s unscrupulous! It is completely corrupt behaviour that one would not expect from the Shrine Maiden of Alshuna who carries the power of the spirits!”

“Lefille-san! Th-th-th-that’s against the rules!! E-embracing him is...”

Felmenia and Hatsumi were trembling with a mixture of anger and other feelings and their faces had become bright red. And in response to them Lefille made a face like she was implying it couldn’t be helped.

“I also cannot afford to lose here after all. I will do everything that I can.”

“Ku, but we have three people on our side!”

“But, Felmenia-jou cannot raise her hand against Suimei-kun!”

“No, the one who will face Suimei-dono is not me!”

Saying that, while bobbing up and down in the float beside Felmenia, Liliana moved forward and raised her hand.

“Suimei, prepare yourself! Realize, the resentment, that I have for being teased!”

“Didn’t you just do that!? Water went up my nose you know!?”

“That one strike wasn’t enough! It is the basics, to pay back three times over! I’ll teach you the fear, of drowning!”

“That’s some deep resentment, oi!”

Seeing Liliana’s deeply rooted desire for revenge, for some reason the one to sympathize with her, was Hatsumi.

“Then, me too!”

“H-H-H-Hatsumi-san!? Wait, you too!?”

“Isn’t it better this way? With this, Felmenia-san and Lefille-san ‘s battle will become fair. From the beginning it was a fair match between the two of them right?”

“If they’ve made their determination then it has nothing to do with us right!?”

“But then we’ll have nothing to do.”

“You can swim right!? It’s a pool you know!?”

“But you know~, I still have a grudge to settle for you keeping a secret from me, right?”

“Right? My ass dammit! Fuck... Aah Reiji, you really are a good guy after all...”

Reaffirming Reiji’s kindness, Suimei went as far as breaking into tears. And without waiting for a starting signal, Hatsumi’s pseudo slash came flying in.

“The Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani! Visions of Rust!”

As Hatsumi swung her hand in the shape of blade down towards Suimei, the illusion of an invisible slash appeared hidden beneath a spray of water. It was the phantom displayed by her sharp fighting spirit. It was a blade which bewildered its opponent’s senses, a phantom sword. This was what bewildered Lefille earlier, and forced her into a hard fight.

“Shit...”

The sharp flicker he caught a glimpse of within the gaps in the spray of water, was not the reflection of light off a blade, it was an illusion. But even knowing it was an illusion—it was the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani. Because it was one of the hidden sword techniques among Japan’s strongest styles, he couldn’t think of it just as an illusion. Suimei took prudence and evaded with a large margin. And as he turned around to the sudden loud noise behind him, he could see the aftereffects of something colliding against the edge of the water tank.

“Eeek....!”

“What are you raising such a pathetic voice for? This kind of thing isn’t some amazing skill that should be that scary right?”

“You, wasn’t it supposed to be a damn illusion!? Rather, if that hit me I wouldn’t just get off with light injuries you know!? Don’t do incomprehensible bullshit with your hand shaped like a blade!”

“Suimei’s the only one I don’t want to hear that from. Really.”

Hatsumi once more cut the water and sent it flying with her hand. This time the slash had no power, but was fast and sharp, the amount of water flying out was also quite significant, so it was at the level where it would hurt from just the shock, but—

“Why is everyone using techniques like magic and crap anyways!?”

“Isn’t it because you get more power out from using it?”

“That’s not what I mean!”

“Eh? Is it wrong?”

“We’re here to relax aren’t—Haa!?”

When he realized, he could sense the presence of mana beneath his feet. Looking down, Liliana was using her specialty skill to cut off her presence to sneak up on him and grabbed both his feet.

“Bububugu, buubu.” (Negative Touch.)

As Liliana was submerged under the water, she let out the air she was holding in her mouth. It was none other than a keyword for magic.

—According to the rules of magic, unless the proper procedures were followed, it was something that wouldn't activate. She couldn't make the correct voice in the current situation—but apparently she thought of that ahead of time and made some adjustments.

As Suimei took the Negative Touch with his feet, he was suddenly no longer able to put strength in his legs, and his body sank into the water.

“Uguoooo... Liliabufuubububu, uppu!”

“Fuhaa... Negligence, is a powerful enemy, Suimei.”

Liliana used magic to pull her float back to her and clung on to it as she talked. And then she turned an unbelievably charming smile to him as she tilted her head to the side.

“What's wrong Suimei? Could it be that you can't swim?”

While grinning broadly, she ostentatiously made a display of her float. She was likely planning this from the very beginning. It was retaliation for him accusing her of being unable to swim, nothing more and nothing less.

Because he suddenly sank, water once more entered his nose, but even so, Suimei calmly used magic to undo the effect of the Negative Touch, rose to the surface and began coughing.

“Gehou...! Haa, haa. Liliana... You sure have a nice personality there don't you...”

“No, not really.”

“I'm not praising you dammit.”

Liliana gave Suimei a thumbs up with a composed expression as he shouted out at her. And while they were having that exchange, Selphy seemed to have her attention attracted by their use of magic.

“It looks like they're all having fun huh. Th-though it seems like we shouldn't get any closer to all of them. It looks dangerous after all.”

While petting a cat, Selphy started talking to the cats. Since they were originally wild cats, they didn't like sudden drops in temperature and were keeping their distance from the water tank, so it was likely unneeded concern on her part. The pool had already descended in chaos, and as Suimei turned his attention to the other battle, they seemed to be livening up in their own way.

“You're quite good, Felmenia-jou! Is that also because of the addition of that mana furnace!?”

“Exactly! Up until now I have been falling behind in output, but I won't fall behind anyone anymore!”

“Interesting!”

“Why is that side developing in a hot blooded manga way!?”

As Felmenia and Lefille raised their voices gallantly, the fight shifted into the next gear. And during that struggle for supremacy, Lefille suddenly took on a different stance from what she had been using before.

“If the match won't come to a conclusion from simply comparing power, then I only need to search for another solution... You said the side that can longer stand loses right?”

Saying that, Lefille raised her right arm to the sky, and formed her hand like a blade. Red wind began coiling around that hand. As everyone watching was thinking that she wouldn't, in that instant, she swung her arm downwards and unleashed the red wind.

“Eat this!”

“Wha!? Fast!”

Lefille's red wind was obviously moving at the speed of a gale just like a strong wind would. The fact that Felmenia's body was struck by that powerful attack was obvious to everyone watching, but—

“H-huh? I thought I got hit?”

The red wind should have collided against her, but there was no impact and it left Felmenia completely bewildered. While surveying her own body she was constantly repeating ‘Huh?’ Nobody could tell what happened. And then she

once more turned her gaze to Lefille.

“Fufufufufu...”

And Lefille was laughing creepily. As Lefille simply stood there laughing without saying anything, Felmenia questioned her.

“Lefille, just what was that...?”

“Now then, I wonder what it was?”

“Please stop making such an evil smile like Suimei-dono!”

“Oi! You! Don’t just casually say something so rude! Who’s evil!?”

As Suimei raised his voice in protest, they all ignored him like it was natural.

“Well, setting that aside. Felmenia-jou, you shouldn’t move around so much you know?”

“H-Haa? Lefille, just what have you been say—Wa-wawawa!”

And just as Felmenia was questioning her further, her swimsuit gently came undone, and fell to the water’s surface. And then, with a ‘boing’—or at least with enough vigour that it felt like it should have been accompanied by such a sound effect, her bountiful breasts spilled out into the air.

“Buu!?”

Seeing that right before his eyes, Suimei spat out the water in his mouth. On the other hand, having lost her upper layer of protection, Felmenia wrapped both her arms around her body in an attempt to hide them and slouched over slightly. Naturally, she didn’t understand why her swimsuit became undone.

“Th-this... Just what...?”

“Isn’t it obvious?”

And what Felmenia received as she muttered in complete bewilderment, was naturally Lefille’s reply. It was obvious. And as Felmenia didn’t seem to get a hint from just that, the girl with red hair put on an unbecoming smile.



“Th-then that red wind just now!?”

“Exactly. Using the red wind, I cut only the fragile part of the swimsuit.

Felmenia-jou, with this, you cannot stand up properly right?”

“L-Lefille today is just performing heinous atrocities one after the other... I have doubts about you being a Shrine Maiden!”

“It’s fine to act a little differently when we’re relaxing right? It’s nothing, this is just some light teasing. Alshuna would also smile upon it.”

Saying that in of itself was rather inappropriate for a Shrine Maiden. Speaking of shrine maidens, the default image Suimei had of them was sacred and graceful, but right now Lefille showed absolutely none of those qualities. And while that was going on, Felmenia suddenly seemed to have noticed something—

“S-Suimei-dono!? What are you looking at!? Please don’t look this way!!”

Suimei had been constantly looking at them, and received a warning. With a scream. The far too insensible boy, probably because of his inexperience, began to shamefully break down in a fluster.

“Eh? Ah, no, um...”

“... Suimei-kun. It’s not good to stare so hard at a naked girl you know?”

“Is that something the culprit should say!?”

In response to Lefille who squinted while calling him out, Suimei raised his voice in protest, however, the girl who was blind of her own shortcomings didn’t let her reproachful stance crumble, and let out a sigh like she was astonished. Being treated so poorly by others, Suimei once more let his dissatisfaction grow strong, when suddenly, a splash of water carrying powerful water pressure assaulted his back.

“Ugo!?”

Because of the powerful blow, Suimei fell pitch forward into the water. Of course, that was a surprise attack from behind, and as he turned around, he saw Hatsumi making an extremely stern face.

“Suimei! You perv!”

She took great offence to Suimei looking at Felmenia’s bare skin. However, since Suimei wasn’t the one at fault, he started to make excuses—

“I-it was just by chance! Just by chance, by chance I caught a glimpse of it!”

“Don’t lie! You were completely staring! Idiot!”

“B-b-b-but, even if you say that—Buhaa!? Wh-what is it now!?”

As Suimei was in a complete fluster, he received another water attack from the side. And in that direction—

“It’s me. V.”

“You’ve just been doing whatever the hell you want for a while now...”

“Fumu, fumu. Teasing Suimei, is amusing huh. I can really understand, Lefille’s feeling, of wanting to tease you, all the time.”

“Right?”

As if they perfectly understood each other, the two of them gave each other a thumbs up with a smile. And while the Suimei teasing alliance was being formed, speaking of Suimei who was incessantly receiving attacks with both his body and mind...

“Goddammit... You guys really need to cut it out...”

Getting interrupted when things were feeling nice and then having Hatsumi and Liliana jab at him every time he showed an opening, Suimei patience was beginning to reach its limits. Seeing that Suimei was suddenly accumulating evil looking mana, having perhaps sensed the impending danger, Hatsumi raised her voice with caution.

“Liliana-chan! Suimei’s started to snap! Look out! When he’s like that, you don’t know what he’ll end up doing!”

“Yes!”

“Don’t talk about people like they’re a dangerous creature dammit!”

However, the two of them wouldn’t listen to him. Just how many times were his complaints ignored already? Without having time to even think about that, the Hatsumi Liliana combo began moving around chaotically despite being underwater.

“Scurrying around like pests...! Actually, why can you guys move so freely in

the water!? Ain't it strange!?"

"Just now, before we moved, Felmenia-san cast magic on us."

"Felmenia made the pool, so our preparations, are perfect."

As one would expect of Felmenia, there were no slip ups. She was clumsy so sometimes she hurt herself, but even with that she had an excess of capability. She was so meticulous that the image of her falling flat on her face back at the Royal Castle seemed completely fake, but in any case...

"Ku... At this rate it'll be bad huh... No, if I just steal away their freedom, there won't be a fight or fuck all!"

Specialists in close combat were moving around under the water and tripping him up. Normally when one heard something like that it was something to fear, and what was happening before his eyes was exactly that scenario. In that incomprehensible situation, Suimei was being attacked incessantly.

However, if they couldn't move, they would eventually stop fighting. As Suimei finally arrived at that simple solution, he immediately took action to obstruct their movement.

"—Oh moisture that is filled to the brim and surrounding the periphery. Thou art a snake and given the role of rope. Oh rope that burns all free will. Conform with thy principles and carry out that prohibitive role."

The incessant attacks had surpassed the limits of Suimei's irritation, and he began to seriously use magic. As if floating in the water, a magic circle expanded, and all the water it touched rose up over the surface of the water and winded together into a rope. Seeing that, Hatsumi stopped moving in bewilderment.

"Wait, what is that? A rope of water?"

"This... Isn't good. Hero Hatsumi. Quickly, evade—"

"It's too late! Eat this!"

The numerous sinew like ropes of water in the air dove under the water's surface. And then, they stole away Hatsumi and Liliana's freedom.

"Y-you're kidding right!? Is water hardening inside water!?"

“In that case, I’ll do something, with mana.”

“It’s useless! Lily!”

What suddenly rang out, was Felmenia’s screaming voice. Though she gave out a warning, she was already too late, and as if responding to her, he began to explain it boldly.

“—You can’t cut it huh. No, you can cut anything that can be cut. But...”

“Lily! There’s no point even if you cut the water!”

“Ah—”

Yes, even if she cut the water within the water, it was only a matter of course that it would be a wasted effort. And at the same time that she realized that, she failed at trying to do so, and Liliana and Hatsumi were completely seized by Suimei’s magic without having any chance to resist.

Before long, their two bodies were lifted out of the water by the prohibitive rope of water and were being held up in midair. In any case, speaking of Suimei who pointlessly used such an intricate spell, perhaps because he was satisfied with his magic deploying exactly as he thought it would, he started to let out a loud laugh which wouldn’t be out of place at all coming from a villain.

“HAHAHA! How’s that!? You can’t move anymore right!? With this, do you feel like calming down a—”

“You pervert! What kind of magic are you using!?”

“Suimei, you’re, the worst... I was, disillusioned.”

“Ha?”

Suimei was confused why he was suddenly being evaluated as the worst when he thought his strategy was pretty good. It was just like him not to notice that he should probably think of it from the perspective of tying up girls with rope, but the main criticism they had didn’t seem to be that anyways.

“If you’re going to tie us up at least tie us up normally! Th-the rope is, going in, weird places...”

“(purupuru)”

Hatsumi turned bright red, and Liliana was trembling like she was holding it all

in. When he paid attention, the rope wasn't just normally wrapped around their bodies, but to make sure that they couldn't move, it was also wedged into strange place. Like their cleavage, between their legs, under their armpits, and the narrow part of their backs. After finally realizing that, Suimei immediately undid his magic and tried to make excuses.

“N-no, I didn't particularly do it with that intention, really...”

“What do you mean by not having that intention...”

“After looking at Felmenia's breasts, I don't want to hear it from you!”

“That's not related right!?”

“Are you denying it!? Last time you also looked at me naked right!?”

And then, Hatsumi threw down a bombshell announcement. The instant she frankly admitted to that, the air in the atmosphere suddenly got cold.

“... Suimei, like I thought, you're, the worst.”

“Gufu!”

And there, the strongest attack came flying in, the words of an innocent little girl. Those words stabbed into Suimei's heart like a sharp knife, but it was inexcusable for that to be the only attack directed towards him.

The cold atmosphere wasn't only around where Suimei, Hatsumi and Liliana were. It was of course also radiating out from where Felmenia and Lefille were.

“... Felmenia-jou. Let us call a temporary truce. We must go to punish Suimeikun.”

“Understood. Suimei-dono! I've misjudged you just a little!”

Adding in the naive line of just a little was just like Felmenia, but in any case, each and every one of them were taking a stance to fire attacks at Suimei. Felmenia was gathering her mana, Lefille was calling out to the power of the spirits and gathering the red wind, Hatsumi was gathering her fighting spirit as a swordswoman, and both of Liliana's hands were filled to the brim with the mana for the Negative Touch. Being pressured on four fronts, Suimei panicked, and while stepping back—

“I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry! NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

In the end, the one on one showdown between Felmenia and Lefille, bounced from one place to the next and became a four on one. They were meant to be relaxing, but to Suimei, all that turned into agony in an instant.



“—Why did it end up like this?”

After being worn out to tatters by four girls, Suimei was slung over the chair at the edge of the water tank like a piece of laundry and left alone, and when he came to, the day was already over. Partway through, it was more or less the fun times at the pool he was expecting, and as he literally came to, the party had already passed and closed. Even though he was meant to relax, he didn’t know what was going on anymore after being worn to tatters.

Taking a look, he could see that everyone had changed from their swimsuits to their regular clothes, and were now warming their chilled bodies by a fire, and drying out their wet hair. It was a good thing that the girls were talking to each enjoyably and giggling on good terms, but the way they handled Suimei and left him all alone was just cruel.

However, if he complained there was no mistaking that he would go through something multiple times worse, so he decided not to say anything as he stood up.

“Ah! Suimei-dono, you’ve recovered consciousness?”

“You guys, no matter how you put it that was just mean...”

Suimei let out a complaint as watered down as he could make it. And then, having some self awareness that they went overboard, Hatsumi spoke up in a somewhat awkward tone.

“W-well, I do think that we went a bit too far, but fundamentally it was Suimei’s fault, so it couldn’t be helped.”

“No, it was mostly accidents and inevitable events right!? In the first place it turned out like this because you all had to have some match...”

As expected, Suimei couldn’t entirely hold back his complaints. And seeing

him like that, as he expected, severe words were sent back to him.

“Suimei, you’re damaging, your manliness.”

“That’s right Suimei-kun. A man should be magnanimous about everything.”

“Uu...”

It was a complete away game, all Suimei could do was groan while still wearing his trunks. However, it wasn’t like Lefille and the others took that much offence from it, and they immediately put on smiles while patting on Suimei’s head.

“Please stop patting and stroking my head.”

“Don’t pout. I was also concerned that I went a little overboard.”

“After going completely wild like that?”

“At that time, I was kind of, in a trance...”

“A trance you say...”

That was just proof of how much fun she was having with it. Though it was good that she unleashed all the stress that had been accumulating. As Suimei sensed Lefille’s feelings and made an expression like he couldn’t say anything, Liliana, who still had her hair down, poked him in the ribs.

“I won’t, forgive you though.”

“That much?”

“That’s right. The next time we get in the pool, it’s a match.”

Liliana thrust out her finger at him to which he replied with a brief ‘Don’t point at people,’ and thought that if they ended up doing it again, maybe he should teach her how to swim. As she made a slightly nihilistic smile, Liliana abruptly turned her head to the side. The figure of her with her hair let down gave off a gap in impression from usual and was quite refreshing. And then, Felmenia clapped her hands together.

“Suimei-dono has regained consciousness, so its about time that we clear away the pool.”

“You’re right, let’s do that. —Suimei, you’re the last, so get changed already and get started.”

“Aren’t I being treated too roughly here...?”

As Hatsumi made a statement with zero consideration, Suimei let out a disheartened voice. On the other hand, Felmenia was already on her way to start cleaning up, and came up before Suimei.

“Then shall we extract the water?”

“How are you going to do it? Erase it with magic?”

“No no, we’ll drain it out into the nearby drainage. Like this, here, and like that.”

Saying that, Felmenia used magic to connect the bottom of the water tank with the drainage. And as she did, the water in the water tank began to swirl around as it slowly began draining out.

“After the water is drained, all that is left is to smooth it out and return the surroundings to how they were before.”

Unexpectedly, she had everything well in order. She likely made it with the goal of being able to clean it up simply afterwards, but in that case...

“Menia, to make this, didn’t it take quite a bit of effort?”

“Yes, well.”

Her ambiguous smile must have been consideration. For the sake of today’s event, it wasn’t difficult to imagine that she put in a considerable amount of effort. There was the size and depth of the water tank, prototyping as well as trial and error to do, so she must have consumed a significant amount of mana.

“Thanks for your hard work.”

“Y-yes!”

She seemed quite happy at having her hardships noticed, and she livened up slightly as she replied. In addition, her footsteps became lighter and she was practically skipping as she drew closer to the water tank. The pool was a great success, so she must have felt great. However...

“Oi, it’s still wet around there so be—”

—THUD

“Uhyah!”

Faster than Suimei could give out a warning, Felmenia fell pitch forward. As expected, there was quite a bit of water in the area from all the splashing about. She managed a proper falling posture, but she seemed have scraped her face and was rubbing her cheek with her hand.

“Owowow...”

“... What are you falling over flat for, here, I’ll lend you a hand.”

“Uu, thank you very much.”

Healing the portions that she scraped on her own, the clumsy magician Felmenia grasped Suimei’s held out hand with teary eyes. Compared to the time in the Royal Castle, she had improved tremendously, but in the end, this portion of her remained the same. In a sense, it was kind of relieving. As Suimei pulled Felmenia up, Hatsumi called out to him after watching that.

“Suimei, you’re kind when it comes to stuff like that huh. If you were always like that, everyone would like you you know?”

“Don’t say it like I’m hated.”

“But, you make a lot of enemies right? It’s not good if you’re not honest right? That’s why you have enemies among the other pupils too.”

The ‘enemies among the other pupils’ she was talking about were the ones at the Kuchiba dojo. Suimei showed up at the dojo, but it wasn’t like he was earnestly following the path of the sword, and the other pupils could see that in him, so they didn’t think highly of him. In any case, there was a reason for that.

“It can’t be helped if I’m shunned in the dojo. The instructor me told that I shouldn’t get too absorbed in the sword in the first place. It was so that it wouldn’t affect my magic.”

“But even so there was still ways of getting along right? I’m saying it’s not good to look like you lack sincerity, you don’t get it right? Geez...”

While fidgeting with her long golden hair, Hatsumi let out an exasperated voice. Suimei then replied while shrugging his shoulders.

“It’s fine. Getting along too well with normal people is something bad for

magicians to do.”

“Then, what about Shana-san and the others?”

Having a painful point poked left Suimei groaning for an instant at a loss for words, and then he somehow got his voice out that was stuck in his throat.

“R-Reiji and the others are an exception.”

“Aah, Suimei’s tsundere side came out~.”

“Shut it! Don’t say tsundere! Rather, I’m not a damn tsundere!”

Suimei cried out as he denied Hatsumi’s accusation, but naturally he was the only one who thought that way. On the other hand, Suimei’s party had been told of the word tsundere before, and even Lefille and Liliana were stifling their laughter. As the pleasant atmosphere turned somewhat awkward for Suimei, Felmenia came to his rescue as she timidly bowed her head.

“I’m sorry...”

“Well, I don’t mind. Look, you have water on your face.”

“Yes...”

As Suimei began wiping Felmenia’s face with a handkerchief, Lefille then walked up to Felmenia.

“Felmenia-jou. Leave the remaining cleanup to Suimei-kun, you can just grab on to my arm.”

“No, I will...”

“You’re tired right? You made the pool and were clamouring around quite a bit too.”

Lefille also properly understood that Felmenia was tired. She showed her consideration as she went on to support Felmenia’s body.

“Then, excuse me...”

And though reservedly, Felmenia leaned against her. It looked kind of like a knight and a princess that one would see from time to time in an act by some all female troupe, but—setting that aside.

“So, cleaning up the rest is up to me huh.”

“Obviously? The only one who can do the clean up other than Felmenia-san is Suimei after all.”

“Oi, when you say it like that it’s kind of irritating...”

As Suimei protested to Hatsumi, all gazes lined up on him at once.

“Heeeh.”

“Muuuu.”

“Hooou.”

“... Sorry. Please let me do it by all means.”

Hatsumi, Liliana and Lefille. Pressured by the three of them, Suimei put up no resistance and yielded. As those strict gazes of criticism assaulted his back, Suimei started taking over the cleanup in low spirits.

As evening was approaching, Suimei was squatting down still wearing his trunks with his shoulders drooped and seemed to be full of sorrow. In a completely reserved atmosphere which was completely different from his usual self, he began to drain the rest of the water from the water tank.

“Let’s drain the water... It takes some time when the hole is so tiny huh...”

Saying that, Suimei widened the hole in the water tank a little and used magic to speed up the rate at which the water drained out as well. The water remaining in the water tank formed a large whirlpool, and began draining several times faster than before.

With that, the water would be completely drained out fairly soon. The water drained out from the hole to the drainage, and because a whirlpool had formed it was being sucked up in a stable manner.

(Hm? Sucked up...? Now that I think of it that topic just came up recently somewhere...)

Sucked up. Those words got caught in a corner of Suimei’s head. He was talking about something like that at some point in time. And it was fairly recently. Just what was it? Just deja vu? No, and just like it suddenly struck a chord in his mind, like a revelation, an omen of realization—

“Ah...”

Suimei’s voice abruptly leaked out. It was the idiotic exhalation that would come out when an unexpected realization come swooping down on him, the final piece of the puzzle.

“That’s it! A whirlpool that can suck it up... In the shape of a mortar... No, a turning hourglass!”

As Suimei suddenly raised his voice, Hatsumi found him somewhat suspicious and distorted her face as she drew nearer.

“Suimei? What’s wrong?”

And in response, as if he didn’t have any time to tell her or stand around, Suimei sprang forth from where he was squatting and gave a reply that didn’t answer the question at all.

“Sorry! I’ll clean up the pool tomorrow! Just leave it like that for today!”

“Eh? Wait, Suimei!?”

“Also, I don’t need dinner today!”

The moment he declared that, Suimei dashed for the door. All that was left behind, was the girls with blank expressions. Before long, Hatsumi let out a somewhat nostalgic smile.

“... Somehow, it’s been a while since I’ve heard Suimei say he didn’t need dinner.”

Hearing Hatsumi’s deeply emotional voice, Felmenia questioned her.

“Is that so?”

“Yeah. When he says that, he ends up completely shutting himself up in his room. I see, those are the times when he suddenly thought of an idea with magic.”

Since long ago, it was quite a frequent occurrence that he would impulsively think of something and shut himself in his room without ever coming out. In the worst cases he would even take a break from school. Whenever she asked just what he was so passionate about, he would never tell her and it left her completely curious, but—Hatsumi’s doubts were just cleared away. On the

other hand, Felmenia seemed to be fixated on an entirely different point...
“Mumumu, hearing him say that he doesn’t want dinner like that to you, is kind of like...”

“Even though he said that, it was my mom’s food.”

“Which means it was aimed at family, he completely recognizes you as family.”

And the one to let out a groan like she sympathized with Felmenia, was as one would expect, Lefille. As the two of them felt like they were being burned by a sense of an impending crisis, Hatsumi’s personality where she couldn’t be honest with herself came up, and she began to get flustered.

“Wai-wait a sec, please don’t just let your imagination run wild on your own like that! I’m not particularly...!”

As as Hatsumi was in the middle of talking, Lefille looked at her with squinted eyes.

“Hatsumi-jou. Even for you, when you look at us getting along with Suimeikun, you don’t find it amusing right?”

“... Th-that’s, well, it’s true, but...”

Squirming around with idle gestures, Hatsumi spoke in a sort of mumble. Seeing her be so indecisive, Liliana let out a grand sigh as if intentionally insulting her.

“Hero Hatsumi, is also not, honest about her own feelings. Just the same, as Suimei.”

“Liliana-chan! Don’t group me together with him!”

“That part, is also the same.”

As Hatsumi tried to sweep away Liliana’s exasperation, Lefille and Felmenia nodded like they were in collusion.

“We must settle this huh.”

“It seems so.”

And then they nodded repeatedly in sync. As if they were about to confront a

serious issue, the two of them spoke in a severe tone. However, their expressions brightened up in an instant.

“In any case, today was fun wasn’t it?”

“You’re right. It’s been a while since I’ve had a breather like this. Thank you, Felmenia-san.”

“Yes. It seems it also went well for Suimei-dono, all that’s left is to wait for her Highness and Reiji-dono.”

That evening, Suimei completed the magic circle to return to his world, and came to the living room with a satisfied face to report it... Of course, it went without saying that he did so while still wearing his trunks.

Chapter 2: Onward, to the Hero's Rescue

Several days had passed since the pool event and the completion of the magic circle to return. The magician Yakagi Suimei was now making his way to Kurant City where the Hadorious mansion was located ahead of Shana Reiji who was planning a triumphant return to the Imperial Capital together with the Imperial soldiers.

Originally, Suimei and Reiji's teams were planning to all gather and go there together. But due to a certain demand, a vanguard team ended up being born. The one who drew up that plan was none other than Astel's royalty, Titania Root Astel. Because of the strong likelihood that a noble from her own country was under suspicion, she proposed a diversionary tactic. And thus, the group split up into irregular groupings of a Suimei team and a Reiji team.

Wherever Reiji was, Titania was. Taking advantage of that obvious fact, she was taking part of the Suimei team who was going ahead. Felmenia was left behind to take part in the parade for the triumphant return as her body double in an attempt to lower any suspicions with regards to the princess' movements.

Because of that, Felmenia, Lefille, Liliana and Io Kuzami were together with Reiji. While Titania, as well as Hatsumi who agreed to participate in Elliot's rescue, were together with Suimei, leading to a different situation than usual.

Graziella was left behind to deal with the post war activities. To avoid moving in a large group, Elliot's attendant Christa and Hatsumi's aid Selphy were also left behind to watch the house.

In any case, as for the first meeting between Hatsumi and Titania—

“—It's a pleasure to meet you, your Royal Highness Titania. Though it is embarrassing to call one such as myself a hero, I am the hero who was summoned in the Alliance, Kuchiba Hatsumi.”

“No, Hatsumi-sama. There is no reason for one such as yourself to lower your head like that. Please be at ease.”

“But.”

“It is fine. It would make me a villain to make the Hero of Salvation bow their head to me. Besides, I have made Reiji-sama and Mizuki do the same, so I do not mind if you talk to me without being so formal.”

“Then... Until I get used to it, the way I talk might be strange, but, please treat me well.”

And immediately following that greeting, their conversation went in a much more violent direction.

“I’ve heard that Hatsumi-sama is quite skillful with a sword.”

“It is not something I’m proud of though.”

“You’re being humble. Along the way, if time permits, I would like to request to have a match with you, would that be alright?”

“Yes, with pleasure. I’m also curious about the skills of the fourth seat of the Seven Swords.”

Hurrying through their introductions, they immediately went on to deepening their friendship as swordswomen. Seeing that they both diligently pursued the same hobby, they got along really quickly, and all of that was still good, but—

(Should cute girls really be getting excited about talking about such violent things with smiles on their faces?)

The picture was pretty, but the sounds attached to it were weird. And after they had that kind of conversation, back to the current time...

“—Now then, it’s about time we get going huh.”

It was currently late in the evening, and they were inside a forest outside the walls surrounding Kurant City. Suimei, Hatsumi and Titania were looking over tall thickets and observing the soldiers on the walls. And while they were doing so, Titania made a dissatisfied expression as her face twitched.

“Why must I do something like this that a thief would do?”

“No, I mean, wasn’t this your demand? You said it before we came here right? ‘We will have Reiji-sama act as a distraction and secretly infiltrate that man’s mansion. We will then discover irrefutable evidence of that man’s evil deed’s and thrust it before him! Just watch and see!’ or something and were

unreasonably motivated to do it weren't you?"

"But to infiltrate in such a manner..."

"Isn't that what infiltrating is? What? Just what were you imagining? It can't be you thought we were going to send an advance notice or something right?"

"There's no way I would right!? If we do that the entire plan would go to waste! I just didn't want something so sneaky like this, I wanted something more elegant, and beautiful."

As Titania yelled out back at him, Suimei replied with an exasperated expression.

"You're unexpectedly stubborn huh. It's that huh? Aren't you putting up quite a mask in front of Reiji?"

"Of course not? Before Reiji-sama I am none other than myself."

Lowering her eyes below the collar of her sand repellent mantle, she hid half her face. As if she completely forgot what she was just yelling out, Titania made that declaration. Had she just gotten shameless, or did she just have that kind of personality in the first place? Being born as royalty, the probably of the latter was much higher, or at least Suimei thought—

"... It's not really my place to say it, but that's so fishy."

"Could you put an end to such impudent talks already? I'll kill you?"

"Uheeeh. Women are scary~."

As she stabbed him with her sharp gaze while the moonlight reflected off her drawn sword, Suimei made his usual bored expression as he grasped his own shoulders. And while the two of them were having that little exchange, Hatsumi spoke up.



“So, what will we do? We can’t just stay here forever right?”

“You’re right. Suimei, you’re the one who had some sort of plan right? You

must properly present it and take the lead.”

“I’ve properly thought of a strategy. We’re going to secretly get in there from here.”

“From here you say...”

Hatsumi muttered in bewilderment as she looked at where they were and where the walls surrounding Kurant city were. Between their current position and the northern wall of Kurant City there was only an open plain with no cover. They were also quite far from the walls. There was no place for them to move while hiding themselves. That being said, even if they switched to the south side, the terrain was similar, so there wouldn’t be any difference. On top of that, since observing the neighbourhood over the walls was important to the defence of the city, their security was quite good. If they ran all the way there across the plains, the soldiers patrolling the walls would doubtlessly spot them. In that case..

“Are you going to hide our figures with your magic?”

“If I did that it would still take effort to get over the wall. I have a way of killing two birds with one stone, so to say.”

“Killing two birds with one stone?”

“... Somehow, I have a really bad feeling about this though.”

While Titania was making a grim face after getting a bad premonition, Suimei started...

“Well, leave it to me. Then, ready? Nutus. Multitudo. Decesco via Gravititas.”
(Reduce Gravity, Decrease Mass, Gravity Road, Take Shape.)

“Eh—?”

“Ha—?”

As Suimei finished his chant, their three bodies vigorously rose to the air. As if they went through a warp, they couldn’t sense gravity or inertia at all, and in the blink of an eye, they were already near the clouds—and it was going smoothly, but.

“Wa, wawawa!?”

“Wh-what, what is this!?”

Since Suimei was spearheading the plan, Hatsumi and Titania’s minds weren’t able to keep up. They couldn’t possibly think that they would suddenly fly into the night sky, and toppled over in midair, flipping over repeatedly after their balance was destroyed.

“S-S-S-S-S-Suimei! This, so suddenly!?”

“Don’t move around so much. I’m properly controlling it.”

“It’s a bigger problem than just control! I-it’s too high...!”

While Titania was screaming and wailing, she flailed her arms and legs around. Seeing her panic so much, Suimei felt like teasing her just a little, but without doing so, he seriously called out to her.

“Please endure it.”

“Please don’t say something impossible like telling me to endure it... Aaah! The ground is steadily getting further away...”

“No, there’s no need to cry right? I’m properly making it so that we won’t fall.”

“I’m not crying! Rather, that’s not the problem!”

“That’s right that’s right! That’s enough, just quickly let us back down! Dummy dummy dummy!”

“Hatsumi too...? Don’t make a fuss, here, I’ll lend you my hand...”

“Eh? U-un...”

As Hatsumi started to complain, Suimei drew nearer to her and soothed her. And as she took his hand, she immediately calmed down. When they were kids, he did the same thing for her all the time, but it was more effective than he thought, and she became completely quiet. Of course, it was correct to assume that Suimei didn’t actually know the real reason for that.



“E-even if you skillfully coaxed Hatsumi-sama, don’t think that you can do something about me! Quickly take us down! Right now! I’m begging you! Please

take us down!”

Being far too scared, Titania’s tone became completely inconsistent and it wasn’t clear whether she was ordering him or begging him. And complying with her request, Suimei put in the sequence for descent into his magic.

Using this method he could bring them all the way to the city streets secretly, but if she already reached her limits, it couldn’t be helped. Letting out a sigh and making it so that the princess’ incessant squawking couldn’t be heard, they landed on top of the city walls.

“And, the landing.”

“Ha, ah, m-my feet... are touching.”

Saying that with a trembling voice, the princess weakly sank to the floor. Was she that scared? As for Hatsumi, when Suimei let go of her hand, her voice leaked out.

“Ah...”

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

“I-its nothing!”

After looking like she was disappointed, she immediately got angry. And then, as if agreeing with her, Titania suddenly became enraged.

“Suimei! Why did you do something so stupid!? If you’re going to do that tell us beforehand!”

“But if I said it out loud you might have refused right?”

“Of course I would! If I heard about this kind of thing beforehand I would have absolutely none of it!”

Saying that, Titania’s eyes angled in anger completely and she went as far as putting her hands on the handles of the swords at her waist like she was about to draw them. Seeing her thrown into complete disorder, Suimei’s mischievous heart surged forth a little.

“It couldn’t be, did you pee yourself?”

“... Line yourself up right there right now, Suimei. I shall sever your head from your body.”

Titania's eyes were already lined up to do the deed. And then, Hatsumi cut into their conversation.

"W-wait, this isn't the time to be talking about that right!? We landed in a place that was easy to spot you know!? If we make a fuss they'll find us right away!"

"Aaah, that'll be fine."

Suimei's indifferent voice rang out. But even so, the patrolling soldiers carrying lights came walking over. Hatsumi and Titania's bodies became stiff for an instant from the tension, but Suimei immediately took action.

The soldiers who spotted the shadows of people didn't even have the time to call out to them. Suimei sprang forth like he was floating in the air, and as he landed right in front of their eyes, the guards' shoulders quietly dropped as they turned around, and returned to their patrol.

"See?"

As if saying it was nothing special, Suimei shrugged his shoulders and returned to their side.

"What was that? Magic again?"

"That's right~. Rather, that's all I can do."

"Manipulating people, is kind of, really villain-ish."

As Hatsumi looked at him with a suspicious face, Suimei just waved her off with a hand and a brief, 'Says you.' On the other hand, Titania looked at him with a severe gaze and thrust out her sword.

"However, Suimei, there isn't just one patrol you know?"

"Then it's fine to just do the same thing. This doesn't take all that much effort after all. If you want, should I just take a lap of the entire wall? We can take a gentle stroll across the famous landmark of Kurant City, it's beautiful city walls"

"What's with that line right out of a morning TV show...?"

"It's certainly like that, but unfortunately there aren't any stores to recommend. About the only thing would be the guard rooms for the patrolling soldiers?"

“No way, seems like they’d stink of sweat.”

Hearing Hatsumi say that, Suimei wanted to quip back about what someone who spent all day in a place that smelled of sweat was saying, but he then noticed that Titania had been rather quiet.

“What’s wrong princess? I’d like you to lower your sword already though.”

“... It is nothing.”

“Despite that, your face is quite scary you know?”

When he looked carefully, Titania was making quite the grim expression. It was like she was imagining something unpleasant. And then, the first to notice the reason behind her extremely severe expression, was Hatsumi.

“If you can do something like that so easily, she’ll make that kind of face right?”

“Well, I guess so, yeah.”

They slipped through the net of guards and easily snuck in. Because it was what they were here to do, Suimei and Hatsumi didn’t feel particularly threatened, but as a person responsible for this country, it was a different matter for Titania. It couldn’t be helped that she had apprehensions about it being infiltrated so easily.

“Is Hatsumi-sama not surprised?”

“It’s cause Suimei did the same thing before back in Miazen’s palace. Besides, to me, he’s an ally.”

“That’s right. Even if you’re here to protect us, I won’t let any harm come to you.”

“—What are you saying with such a serious face!? You idiot!”

“Ow! What are you doing!?”

Suimei meant to be dead serious, but perhaps because such a cheesy line wasn’t any good, Hatsumi turned bright red as she repeatedly kicked Suimei’s shin. On the other hand, Titania looked at him with a frank gaze.

“It didn’t look like you did anything all that impressive though.”

“I didn’t intend to do anything all that impressive either? It’s way harder to get into a magician’s house which blocks unwanted trespassers than it is to do something like this.”

Suimei shrugged his shoulders. This obviously applied to modern security systems, but as Suimei had constantly made opponents of other magicians, breaking through a mere city wall was something simple. There was no mechanical or magical traps after all. It was out of the question that he would have problems.

“... What? You still got something else to say?”

“No, I just thought that it wouldn’t have been funny to make an enemy of you. If we forcefully threw you out of the Royal Castle, we would have gone through something terrible huh.”

“Though in truth there was exactly one guy who went through something terrible, no, there was more or less one other huh.”

“It is not something to laugh about you know? In truth, there were motions made to take such actions. They said it was because there was a possibility that an incompetent person would have an influence on Hero-dono’s determination, though that was mostly just the nobles. In truth, rather than incompetent, you ended up being extremely hazardous goods though.”

“You’re saying hazardous goods in front of the person in question?”

As Suimei squinted at her, Titania made a nonchalant expression. And while that was going on, he suddenly realized something.

“—Ah! Oh yeah. There was something else we had to do huh.”

“...? Was there something?”

“It is something extremely important now that we have infiltrated this far.”

Suimei began nodding repeatedly like he was convincing himself on his own, and started walking away from the two girls. His destination was back towards the walking patrol. Watching him do so without any sense of caution, the other two whispered to each other.

“I wonder what that ‘something extremely important’ is? Could he be about

to raise some kind of uproar?”

“That would be a little... No matter how inattentive Suimei is, he should understand the consequences of such actions. He’s also a man who brings out plans that can’t be made light of...”

“We don’t know for sure though right? He has a tendency to make a dead serious face while starting something completely ridiculous.”

“That’s true isn’t it. I cannot deny that at all.”

Taking advantage of Suimei distancing himself from them, Hatsumi and Titania started to say cruel things about him. As they carefully observed Suimei’s actions, he was talking to the guards while his eyes glowed red.

“Hey, sorry ’bout this, but is there an inn you can recommend to me in this district?”

“An inn is it? If it’s that, then there is a nice inn on the central street aimed at the middle class. They’ve got a big sign up so you should be able to spot it right away. They’ve also got a delicious breakfast included there.”

“Thanks, also, good work with the security.”

After showing the guard his appreciation, Suimei briskly returned. And the gazes the two of them were pointing towards him were like they found his perfectly relaxed and normal conversation with the guard odd, and were dumbfounded at how to put it into words.

“... What’s up?”

“... Hey Suimei. The important thing that you were talking about...”

“Choosing a place to sleep is important right? If we stay at a crappy inn it would lower the tension you know?”

“No, well, that’s certainly true, but...”

It’s still a bit off point. But because what he was saying was certainly true, she couldn’t really turn it back on him and stopped there. While she was troubled on how to quip back at him, Titania made an exasperated expression, and started talking.

“Hatsumi-sama, resign yourself. There is no meaning in saying anything to this

man.”

“You’re right. Un. My only ally here is Titania-san.”

“Somehow you two have been super rude for a while now...”

And with that, Suimei’s vanguard team safely succeeded in infiltrating Kurant City.



A few days after Suimei and the others departed towards Kurant City, the victory parade in the Imperial Capital came to an end without any problems at all.

Using magic, Felmenia’s disguise as Titania was perfect, and their biggest anxiety in Io Kuzami didn’t run wild. If they had to make any complaints, it would only be the fact that because they had to smile and wave their hand continuously, all participants had a strange cramp to their cheek muscles, and their arms were extremely tired.

By no means did Lefille shrink, and Liliana only got sleepy several times. Those were the only troubles they caught a glimpse of. In any case, as the major event finished successfully, the second group’s leader, Reiji, was now in a carriage headed to Kurant City, and remembering his conversation with Suimei.

“Magic... No, modern magic huh...”

While gazing out the carriage’s window, he remembered what he talked about with Suimei at the northern military encampment. After finding out he was a magician, Suimei told him many things, and even now he found them strange. Just where in that peaceful civilization of convenience and development did something uncertain like magic exist?

However, that just showed how the things known as the mysteries were just that careful and modest in the way they concealed themselves to the point where he would think that way. It was like a light nobody would ever find concealed by the neon lights between buildings.

After talking about such things and being unable to believe in magic in the other world, Reiji laughed, and Suimei told him this...

—The majority of the people in our world were raised by science after all. Why do you think that is? In truth... In truth, which one is the more proper set of laws isn't something that anybody can tell right? At the end of the day, laws are things humans arbitrarily thought of and applied to occurring phenomena, nothing more and nothing less. When you do something ridiculous with magic, when it fails, it'll end up being cause it was unscientific. But when you use physical laws to strive for an answer and fail, they just say you fail right? Everyone desires the reason for a failure in science, but only magicians understand the failures behind magic. That's why, in the end, they end up thinking it's impossible. It's a matter of a difference in perception. Because they are raised on physical laws, they end up only believing in them. With only knowledge of science and physics, they could only give birth to things from successes based on those. That's why—

That's why, you think that way. He said. And in the end, even if they succeeded in magic, if they couldn't make it part of daily life, it couldn't be understood. Even for Reiji who could use magic now, he still found it strange. It could be said that the very foundation of being able to believe in magic had already been demolished in the other world.

While watching the flowing scenery outside the carriage window, Reiji let his thoughts run. And then, suddenly, he became curious about his good friend who taught him all this.

“Um, is Suimei strong?”

And as that came to mind, he asked Lefille who was sitting next to him. Hearing that, Lefille lightly pushed up the brim of her large hat to show her face.

“Suimei-kun is strong. I'm a swordswoman so I can't really go into detail about how strong he is and really explain it, but if Suimei-kun is weak, then pretty much everyone in this world would be small fry.”

Hearing her words, Reiji looked over to Felmenia and Liliana, and the two of them simply gave a light nod as if they were in complete agreement. And then, as he looked to the other person who was looking out the window nostalgically, Io Kuzami...

“Hm? Aah, my rival is strong you know? What, can you not tell yourself?”

“Uun. Cause after finding out he was a magician, he’s been the same as always...”

After confessing he was a magician, in the end, Suimei was none other than Suimei himself. Just like always, he would find things bothersome and was fundamentally flippant. He talked about all sorts of things to Reiji, but he still didn’t quite understand anything regarding Suimei’s strength.

“Kukuku, my fiancé’s power of observation still has a long way to go I see.”

“Even if it is little by little, I feel like I’m getting stronger though.”

“Is that not just because you are becoming familiar with the Goddess’ divine protection?”

“As I thought, is that all it is...?”

He was self aware that he had become stronger. But he was also aware that it was something that was advancing at an unnatural speed. Therefore, he sometimes wondered if he was truly getting stronger or not.

“Reiji, what kind of feeling, is it to receive, the power, of the Goddess’ divine protection?”

At Liliana’s sudden question, Reiji gripped and opened his hands like a baby would while replying.

“Honestly, I don’t really know myself. It kind of feels like, without doing anything, I got stronger... Or something?”

“That’s, your imagination... Or I guess not?”

“Perhaps it is that Sacrament’s power?”

“Uun... That would be a different feeling. When I pull out the Sacrament’s power, I feel like my abilities are enhanced, I mean, it feels like I could fight forever. Like I can’t see my limits. It feels like my mana and stamina are always full.”

He talked about the Sacrament raising his mana and stamina, but it wasn’t something that went on forever. Therefore, to Reiji, it had a slightly out of place sensation to it.

“Compared to before, I feel like you have gotten stronger too.”

“Could you explain? Felmenia-jou.”

“I believe it is the divine protection from the Goddess which accompanies the hero summoning ritual. I’ve heard it gradually makes one stronger, so right now wouldn’t that be the sensation Reiji-dono is feeling in his increase of power?”

“The divine protection of the Goddess is amazing huh.”

“It’s, unfair.”

While Lefille and Liliana were being envious, Felmenia raised her hand like she had something she wanted to talk about.

“Um, Reiji-dono. There is something I’m a little curious about.”

“Something you’re curious about?”

As Reiji asked back, Felmenia exchanged glances with Lefille. And Lefille returned her a nod. It seemed they both had the same question. And eventually, Lefille spoke up.

“Um, I’ll cut straight to the point, but, we were wondering if Reiji-kun is angry at Suimei-kun.”

“If I’m angry at Suimei-kun... Is it?”

“Um, it’s about Suimei-dono keeping the fact that he was a magician secret from Reiji-dono. We thought, there might be something you’re still angry about.’

“Aah...”

And from that, he figured it out. The two of them were anxious that cracks had formed in his relationship with Suimei. While looking at them, he remembered the modern world once more.

“... Back when we were in the other world, I stuck my neck into all sorts of dangerous things all the time, I did nothing but unreasonable stuff. When I see someone in trouble, I somehow lose my self control, and end up trying to help them... And because of that, I always cause trouble to Suimei and Mizuki who were together with me... At those times, I ended up getting saved by something weird happening quite a bit... Now that I think about it once more, Suimei was

saving me behind the scenes.”

As he was talking while thinking about the past, it couldn't be helped that he started rambling. However, when he really thought about it, there were tons of things that happened which could have only meant that magic was involved. When he was surrounded by delinquents, for some reason they would clatter to the ground all on their own. When the people from the yakuza shot at him with pistols, the bullets missed. The culprit behind a swindling incident just up and turned himself in. If he brought them all up, there would be no end to it. That's why—

“The fact that he kept it a secret does in fact leave me feeling a bit murky, but in that world, those are the rules so it can't really be helped. Conversely, I'm the one who should be apologizing for not thanking him for all those times... It's nothing but events like that, I'm surprised he didn't just abandon me.”

“But, when you split up at the Royal Castle, would that not be the same as Suimei-kun abandoning you?”

“Fighting against the demons was something that I decided arbitrarily without consulting those two. It would be normal to abandon me in that kind of scenario right? You wouldn't want to lend a hand to someone who arbitrarily wants to do something unreasonable, and it's not like he wasn't going to tell us about the way back to our world.”

“That in of itself is rather extreme.”

“That may be so, but...”

In short, Reiji took action without thinking about it too much. Getting high on the fact that he was chosen, he mistook it as being able to do anything. If Suimei accused him of doing so arbitrarily, there was no way he could say anything. Even Suimei had things that he wanted to do. Reiji had no right to restrict those choices. Besides...

“It's not like Suimei didn't do anything. Suimei moved around in accordance to his own beliefs. And when we came to the Imperial Capital, he ushered us in with open arms. That's why, isn't that enough of this topic?”

“... What a good friend.”

“He's wasted, on Suimei.”

Lefille gave a smile, but Liliana had no mercy. However, that just showed how much she opened her heart. Suimei likely made sure that she showed no restraint.

“Now that I think of it, I heard that Lefille-san ran away from Astel together with Suimei, but was that actually...?”

“Aah, that’s wrong. We didn’t run away, I was saved by Suimei-kun.”

After hearing Lefille’s answer, Reiji casually turned his gaze over to Felmenia.

“My case is a little peculiar... I picked a fight with Suimei-dono and had the tables completely turned on me.”

“Heh? T-turned the tables!? You mean you fought against Suimei!?”

“Yes. It was one, two weeks after Reiji-dono and the others came to the Royal Castle. Um, I found Suimei-dono’s actions to be suspicious, and I tailed him during the night, when in fact I was actually being lured in.”

“Th-that kind of thing happened...?”

“Is it that surprising?”

“... Well, you know, I don’t quite see the image of Sensei picking a fight like that on your own.”

“At that time, um, I was rather arrogant to the point where it was embarrassing. I do think Reiji-dono also saw that...”

“Aah, now that you mention it...”

Hearing her say that, he remembered. When she was chosen as the one to teach them magic, she treated her fellow Court Mage in a rather high handed manner. Her speech was nowhere near as polite as it was now, so now that he thought of it, she certainly may have been arrogant.

“And so, Sebastian took advantage of that arrogance and made me think that Suimei-dono was suspicious. And after I was defeated by Suimei-dono, we ended up defeating Sebastian together.”

Felmenia spoke like the first half was very embarrassing, but for some reason she seemed proud of the second half. And seeing her like that, Lefille seemed to have been triggered.

“I-I also defeated a demon general together with Suimei-kun you know!?”

“I-I was the first to defeat an enemy together with Suimei-dono!”

“Unlike Felmenia-jou, I never caused a dispute with him!”

“You’re lying! I heard that you had a little fight!”

Watching their quarrel as they let out high pitched voices at each other, Reiji suddenly began laughing. Seeing him smile like that, Felmenia and Lefille both tilted their heads to the side.

“I see Suimei is just as popular as ever huh.”

“Ha?”

“Fu?”

Though the two of them had been yelling face to face, they turned to Reiji at the same time. And then, they realized the meaning behind his words.

“Um, from what Reiji-dono just said, it could be taken as meaning that there are women aiming for Suimei-dono even in the other world, but...”

“Just what does that mean, Reiji-kun?”

“It means what it sounds like. Even over there, Suimei had girls coming to visit his place all the time. His childhood friend... I think you already know about Kuchiba-san, but other than that there was that foreign girl, and that foreign girl, and that foreign girl, and...”

Hearing that story, Liliana’s sleepy looking eye narrowed even more at the shadiness of it all.

“... Suimei, is a blockhead.”

“Good grief, I agree completely. That man needs to be stabbed by someone once already. Fuu.”

And in agreement, even Io Kuzami let out some bitter words. It was rather cruel, but because it was something easy to sympathize with, even Reiji hesitated to protect Suimei there. On the other hand, as for Lefille and Felmenia...

“Regarding that, it seems we must hear about it from him in detail huh.”

“You’re right. Let’s cooperate and corner him.”

Despite fighting just now, the two of them firmly clasped each others hands. It was likely that if they cooperated, Suimei would be cornered without being able to lift a finger. In any case...

“Everyone, we’re almost, at Kurant City.”

Drawn by Liliana’s announcement, Reiji looked out the window towards their destination. The gates of Kurant City and the line of people waiting to get in were coming into sight. They were going to arrive briefly.

“If I remember right, we were going to enter just like this right?”

“Yes. After passing the gate, we’ll find an opportunity, to meet with Suimei’s group.”

After confirming their plans, the carriage eventually arrived at the gate, and since they made arrangements beforehand, they immediately passed through and dismounted the carriage. They were officially entering the city to pay a visit, so everything proceeded a lot smoother than they thought it would. The plaza before the gate to the castle extended out lightly. The sky was clear. After being freed from the cramped carriage, it was refreshing.

“I wonder where Suimei is...”

Saying that, Reiji looked around casually, and Lefille grinned as she pointed an evil smile at him.

“Oh my? Is Reiji-kun not worried about her Highness Titania at all?”

“Eh? N-no, I’m also worried about Tia!”

“Fumu, instead of always showing concern for that tomboy princess, I would rather like that you show concern for me.”

“No, um...”

Even Io Kuzama got involved in Lefille’s teasing. In order to avert that increasingly awkward topic from continuing, Reiji spoke out in a somewhat loud voice.

“Th-this also applies to Suimei’s group, but is it alright to come in contact with them like this!?”

“Regarding that, it’s fine. Me, and Felmenia, are here.”

“Then Reiji-dono, that way.”

Felmenia pointed out to an opening between buildings.

“That way is... An alley?”

“Reiji-kun. There is no surveillance deep in the alley. To avoid being seen, we should quickly go inside.”

“I see.”

Convinced by Lefille’s statement, Reiji nodded, and all of them jogged into the alley. While they were doing so, they could sense two presences chasing them. It was likely that, just as their suspicions indicated, they were Hadorious’ surveillance team who were observing the hero’s movements.

Following the girls’ plan admirably, after getting far enough into the alley, Liliana served as the rear guard and cast a spell behind them—and eventually came back.

“With that, we’re good.”

“Did you do something?”

Liliana made a V sign with a somehow self satisfied look while Reiji bent over slightly as he asked her. And in her stead, Felmenia replied.

“It’s concealment magic. Even if the observers find us, they would not care about us. Suimei-dono said something like we became pebbles on the side of the road. I don’t... Really understand the example though.”

“Aah...”

Hearing her explanation, Reiji remembered the secret item from a certain famous anime. When they wore that, they would no longer be perceived by other people. Frankly, it was an outrageous stealth weapon, so being able to do something similar gave Reiji a glimpse of how abnormal magic from his world was.

“All that’s left is to find Suimei and the others huh. I wonder where they are.”

Saying that, Reiji turned around to exit the alley, when suddenly, Liliana—

“Nyaa.”

Began imitating a meowing cat. Nyaa, nyaa, it was like she was doing an imitation to call out a cat like one would do for birds, just like an impulsive child would. However, that continued without pause.

“Nyaa, nyaa, nyaa, nyaa.”

“U-um, Liliana-chan?”

“Nyaa, nyaa, nyaaaa.”

“Eh? Eeh...?”

As Liliana suddenly started meowing, Reiji couldn't hide his bewilderment. Reiji also knew about her love for cats, but he couldn't tell if she was just amusing herself, or if it was some sort of ritual. Without figuring out which, he tried asking Lefille who was standing next to him.

“Ummm, Lefille-san. What...”

“Isn't it cute?”

While pointing his gaze at Liliana and asking, Lefille curled up her hand like she was beckoning a cat with a broad grin as she smiled. It was just like she was looking at an innocent child with a pleasant smile. And then, Io Kuzami hopped on to their conversation.

“Umu. It is cute. As expected of a disciple of mine. She properly possesses both cuteness and adorableness.”

Io Kuzami nodded repeated like she was satisfied. In that case, was she really just playing? Up until now, without flaw, no, even beyond that, Liliana was acting perfectly meticulous to accomplish their goals, so the action she was showing now went completely against that image of her, and it only left Reiji with bewilderment.

As his expression distorted into a strange shape, Lefille made a carefree smile like she was saying that her light prank succeeded.

“It's a joke, Reiji-kun. It is likely that this was the method decided on beforehand to make contact.”

“This, is?”

Just what was she going to accomplish by meowing? Reiji still couldn't

understand the situation. However, now that he thought of it, it did remind him of something. In the surroundings of the Yakagi residence in the Imperial Capital, there were a lot of cats.

While that was going on, a single black cat appeared from deep within the alley. Liliana stopped meowing, and the black cat came closer to her. The black cat that looked like it was lost stared into Liliana's eye with its golden eyes with vertical slits in them, and Liliana returned its gaze. After that, they meowed at each other for a while, and Liliana turned back towards the group.



“Looks like, it’s this way.”

“Nyaa.”

As if following up on Liliana's words, the cat turned towards the interior of the alley and lightly raised its front paw. It was behaviour like it was guiding them. As Liliana followed after the cat, Felmenia and Lefille also followed right along. Hurrying after them in a fluster, Reiji called out to Liliana.

"You can talk to cats?"

"Rather than talk, it's closer to aligning with their thoughts, though. The nuance is the same."

Hearing her mispronunciation, Io Kuzami held her chin.

"Rather than nuance, in this case it would be nyaance."

"... Um, that, are you trying to say it was funny?"

As Io Kuzami made a triumphant look, Reiji pointed that out in exasperation, and she simply laughed joyfully. If it was the usual Mizuki—of course this applied even when she had her outbreak of chuuni, it wasn't behaviour that he could possibly imagine her doing, which left Reiji curious. In any case...

Following after the cat and Liliana, they eventually arrived at an inn on the central street. The aforementioned inn had a large sign and quite the conspicuous appearance. There were a lot of people going in and out, if one were to ask about inns, this was exactly the popular type that would come up.

"Umm... Could it be, that's it?"

"Looks like it."

"To hide in such an easy to find place is a little..."

He couldn't believe it. A cheap inn was pretty much the image of a place to hide. It was something that would come up in spy movies and novels all the time, but the one in front of his eyes was an 'inn that was famous despite not being fancy,' which was pretty much the definition of the most unsuitable place to hide.

"It could also be said that, that is exactly why."

"Because nobody would think we would be hiding here, or something?"

"Yes. Though having said that, to Suimei, it probably had nothing, to do with that."

Those words were likely an appraisal of Suimei's abilities. If he was like the mages who came up in novels frequently and had magic to manipulate people, it certainly didn't really matter much. Though making him an enemy like that would be terrifying.

While Liliana was thanking the cat and petting it, the others went into the inn to look for Suimei and the others. And without even looking for their room, they found them immediately. In a place that was easy to see from the entrance, at a table in the hall on the second floor, the three of them were elegantly enjoying tea time.

"Yo."

As they ascended the stairs and got closer, Suimei looked over and spotted them, and casually raised his hand as he called out to them. Reiji couldn't tell whether they were just resting or discussing their plans from now. But he was sitting there drinking rose water with Titania and Hatsumi.

In that situation which seemed to be completely unrelated to the words 'hiding oneself,' Reiji replied with a slight sense of exasperation.

"It seems you're doing this a bit more elegantly than I thought."

"Well, that's cause there's no absolute reason that we have to be modest while hiding ourselves. If our concealment is perfect, then it doesn't matter what we do."

"You call that concealment?"

"Strictly speaking, we're blending in. In short, it's fine if the other side can't tell."

Saying that, Suimei drank down some of the rose water as if to refresh his mouth from the bitterness of his own cynicism and took a breath of the fragrance. Following up after him, Hatsumi turned a smile to Reiji.

"Good job. Looks like it went well on your side."

"Un. Kuchiba-san, thanks for your efforts in babysitting Suimei."

"... You know, I've been doing this seriously all this time, so why do you have to say that kind of crap?"

Seeing Hatsumi's smile, Suimei looked back at Reiji with a bitter face. He was a man who couldn't take a joke. On the other hand, Titania spoke up in a harsh tone.

"It is because of your habitual behaviour is it not? It is already too late to recover, your assessment has already fallen to the ground you know?"

"Hey, are you still holding a damn grudge against me? It's not that bad that you peed yourself—"

"I did not! Please do not fabricate a story on your own!"

Turning bright red, Titania shouted at Suimei. Immediately following that, she turned to Reiji while restlessly yelling out things like 'Suimei was lying!' or 'It's a scheme to show contempt for me!' as she tried to smooth it over and keep up appearances. On the other hand, Reiji found Titania looking in complete disorder to be somewhat refreshing, but—in any case, Hatsumi let out a sigh as she watched that. After seeing that Titania had quieted down, Reiji questioned her about the actual matter at hand.

"So, Tia, what do we do now?"

"... I apologize for saying so after you just arrived, but we take action tonight. I shall go into the particular details from here."

And so, Titania went on to explain their strategy.



The evening that Reiji and the others arrived in Kurant City, it was the new moon. Because Suimei and Hatsumi requested that this would be the day they took action, a little earlier than they originally planned, Reiji went to visit Hadorious' mansion from the front to act as a distraction while Suimei and the others snuck in.

The parties were slightly adjusted from when they departed to Kurant City. Suimei, Hatsumi and Titania took in Liliana and became a four person team, and were making their way to the back of the duke's mansion.

During the meeting for the rescue operation, Hatsumi and Reiji raised doubts about using the back since the patrolling guards around there were quite dense,

but Suimei simply said ‘When the place is easy to understand, it’s easier to cast magic,’ and so their infiltration route was decided. The back of the mansion had a hedge maze in it, and there was Hadorious’ private soldiers functioning as guards there, but there was no way they could do anything about Suimei’s magic, so the infiltration succeeded without a hitch. Naturally, there were measures taken to prevent trespassing using magic along the way, but—

“Too easy, too easy.”

So said Suimei as he easily cancelled out those measures. The reason he let out a ‘kekeke’ in a vulgar laugh and tampered with those measures more than he had to, was likely simple harassment towards the duke. As Suimei broke the window and gradually made his way in, Hatsumi, who was right behind him, spoke up.

“You kind of look like a burglar.”

“Shouldn’t you say agent? Why have you been picking nothing but bad images ever since we started this?”

“But you know...”

“I understand what Hatsumi-sama wants to say. Certainly, it cannot be helped that your actions resemble a petty thief.”

Following up after her was Titania, as she pointed a critical gaze towards Suimei. If they had such a bad image of it, it would have been fine for them not to volunteer for the infiltration squad. Well, he could understand that sneaking in didn’t fit well with a hero and a princess, so it couldn’t be helped that they were quite stubborn about it.

“Oi, Liliana, say something to these guys. They’re making fun of your specialty you know?”

“Liliana-chan is cute so it’s fine.”

“Cuteness is justice is nothing better than being a hunk, go die.”

“...”

As Hatsumi started to puff out her cheeks in dissatisfaction, the main topic of their conversation, Liliana, was carefully surveying their surroundings. She

seemed to be concerned about something.

“What’s wrong, Liliana?”

“No... Let’s go.”

Liliana shook her head and began walking down the corridor of the mansion. If she was convinced of something she would likely report it, so setting that aside, they moved on to infiltrating the first floor. While carefully surveying their surroundings, they moved while being watchful of the presence of people.

“Rather, it’s a lot more modest than I thought huh.”

While observing the interior of the mansion, Suimei brought up his impressions for no particular reason. Normally, a noble’s mansion would be quite luxurious. Nobles simply had that kind of nature, they were all ostentatious, and for the sake of displaying their authority, everything they had was dressed up. If they displayed their power, their superiority would be acknowledged. ‘I have this many assets. I have the ability and political strength to succeed in managing a territory.’ As if to assert that, it was in a sense, a strategy.

However, despite being a big noble with strong ties to royalty, the Hadorious mansion didn’t have anything gaudy in it, and was quite modest. That being said, the mansion was three stories tall and when the front door was opened it revealed a huge room, so it was completely different from a simple household.

In any case, the inside of the mansion was tidy. They continued to walk down the attentively maintained corridor. There were candles set up on the white walls along with paintings and there was a red carpet beneath their feet. The wooden doors lined up in the corridor looked distinctly like those chocolate bars, and there were mana lamps set up here and there. It was an interior which drew the line at being rich.

As they casually opened a door, a table in the shape of a white cross came into sight, and there were chairs and sofas set up with soft looking cushions. It looked classy, and it could be said that he didn’t have bad tastes. While they carefully searched the mansion, Hatsumi suddenly came to a stop.

“Hatsumi, what’s up?”

“This room...”

Hatsumi replied with a mutter as it looked like she had her awareness stolen by a single door. Something in one of the deeper rooms seemed to have caught her attention, and as Titania drew closer to her, she also called out to Hatsumi.

“Hatsumi-sama, is there something with this—Mu?”

She noticed something, Titania’s body stiffened for a single instant. And in response to her, Hatsumi gave a smile.

“Sorry, I’m the one who noticed first, so I’ll be taking it.”

And then she stepped forward towards the door. And even as they called out to her hot on her heels...

“Oi, Hatsumi!”

“Hatsumi-sama!”

“Go without me! I’ll do something about this myself, so...”

She opened the door, and vanished into the room.

“My goodness, just what did she notice?”

“It is likely that it was a slight presence. One that was sharp like a sword.”

“So the first one to notice went to get the first strike huh...”

Titania also sensed the fighting spirit of a swordsman. Certainly, it made sense to do something about someone who noticed their infiltration, it was the most basic of basics. It wasn’t a poor move, but more than half her reason for doing so was probably because her pride as a swordswoman was stimulated.



A little before Suimei’s team infiltrated the mansion, Reiji, Felmenia, Lefille and Io Kuzami already arrived at the front of the duke’s mansion, and were face to face with the mansion’s owner, Lucas de Hadorious.

Visiting a noble’s mansion in the evening and asking to talk while standing around was far outside the realm of common sense, but on the other hand, Hadorious accepting and appearing in front of the mansion without even a single escort was even further outside the realm of common sense. As he was

dressed properly like a noble, there was a sword firmly secured at his waist.

He looked like a great man with black, greying hair, a well adjusted beard, and a large scar that went from his brow to his cheek which split his face diagonally. He was close to two metres tall, and despite being in a relaxed posture, he wore a fairly robust spirit around him.

Hadorious then spoke to Felmenia in a somewhat critical and disappointed tone.

“—To call for me at this kind of hour without any forewarning, it cannot be helped that I say that you lack common sense. White Flame-dono.”

“Ha. I earnestly beg for your forgiveness to have called for you in spite of it being the time for you to rest.”

Felmenia put her hand to her chest and bowed deeply, but Hadorious raised his eyebrow like that wouldn't make him feel any better about it.

“And, so? Those words that didn't bear in mind that you basically told me to just come on out, do you think that they are words befitting a daughter of the Stingray house?”

“Regarding that matter, I sincerely ask for your forgiveness. Moreover, since your Grace the Duke had noticed that, is that not why you came out to the entrance yourself like this?”

“... As I thought, the one over there is the hero Reiji-dono is it not?”

As he said that, the dissatisfaction that Hadorious had been showing until then vanished into thin air, and the sharp atmosphere around his body softened up. They exchanged greetings in an awfully roundabout manner, but as if implying that such a greeting was planned out beforehand, he acted like it was nothing at all. In a sense, it could be said to be the tastes of a noble. After that conversation that seemed like they were measuring each other out had finished, Reiji walked out in front of Hadorious.

“It has been a long time since we spoke, Duke Hadorious.”

“Hero-dono. I am not in a position to complain about your visit, but just as I said before, I cannot help but say that visiting at such an hour is quite troublesome for me.”

He couldn't openly complain about the hero, but his words were full of stinging bites as he spoke disagreeably. Naturally since Reiji was quite irritated inside, he was secretly feeling good about that, but—in any case.

“Your Grace, there was something that I wanted to talk with you about no matter what, and so we have come forth like this today.”

“A talk is it? My apologies but though I look like this, I am also busy. I will have you keep it short, if it will take a while then I would like you to come back another day.”

“No, by all means I'd like to talk right here, right now.”

“... Incidentally, where is her Highness Titania right now?”

And as Hadorious asked, Felmenia answered him.

“Her Highness the Princess is currently busy with another matter. Trustworthy people are alongside her, so there is no need for you to worry about her well being.”

“I see.”

As Hadorious said that, he gazed at Felmenia like he was digging for answers. If it was Felmenia from before, something would show on her face, but now that she had gotten stronger, she had the composure to ward such thoughts off. Reiji then spoke up himself.

“Your Grace, is it alright for me to ask you something?”

“What is it I wonder?”

“Elliot Austin. Does your Grace have a clue as to his whereabouts?”

Hearing Reiji's question, Hadorious' face became grim for a single instant, and returned to normal right away.

“... The hero from El Meide is having a sojourn in my mansion. Currently, we are making all efforts to show him hospitality.”

He admitted it honestly. Naturally, it matched up with what Christa had said, so there was nothing to be surprised about though.

“The magic priest that served as his attendant came to me looked for help.

She said that Duke Hadorious has him in confinement. It is likely some kind of misunderstanding, but if you do not mind me asking, would it be alright for me to meet with him?”

Reiji spoke in a rather roundabout manner. Because of the infiltration team, everything was a complete facade, but as Reiji pointed his gaze at Hadorious...

“I will have to deny your request.”

“Why is that? If he is just being shown hospitality, then I do not think he would mind right? If he is already resting, then by all means we do not need to meet with him right away. We could even do so on another day, but...”

“My answer will not change. I also won’t tell you the reason.”

As the duke became obstinate, Felmenia spoke in a strong tone.

“Your Grace. With all due respect, from what you are saying, I do think it is correct to assume that you are admitting by your own will that you are unjustly confining Elliot-dono just as Christa-dono had said.”

“If that is the case, just what can you do?”

At that unreasonable reply which made full use of Hadorious’ authority, Felmenia was at a loss for words. As one would expect, she was troubled about how to proceed when he played such a move. In her stead, Reiji scowled at Hadorious.

“Then I will force my way in, right now.”

“By force is it?”

After repeating Reiji’s intentions, he let out a somehow delighted laugh with a ‘Fufufu.’ Reiji thought it was unavoidable that the duke would sneer at him while looking down on him for being a savage, but the unexpected response ended up bewildering him. And then, the clincher...

“So be it, Hero-dono. Just as you desire, shall I be your opponent?”

“... Tch!!”

As Hadorious suddenly clad himself in an intense fighting spirit, Reiji unintentionally leaped backwards. Felmenia cut in front of him as if protecting him, and Lefille and Io Kuzami who had been staying back came running over.

“Your Grace. Do you intend to point your sword at Reiji-dono?”

“It’s nothing, White Flame-dono, there is no need for your concern. The reason I am swinging my sword here, is only to earnestly ascertain Hero-dono’s power.”

“I do believe that even your Grace would be unable to escape criticism of your rude behaviour by trying your strength against the Hero of Salvation though.”

“White Flame-dono, are you saying that my powers are undeserving of a such a match?”

“That’s... But I do believe it cannot be allowed?”

Though Felmenia was at a loss for a moment, she did not yield as she stood in front of Reiji. And in response to her, Hadorious showed a refreshing face as he spoke.

“White Flame-dono. Your opponent, will be them.”

As the duke snapped his fingers, an armed group suddenly appeared out of nowhere. They looked familiar to the ones they saw when they previously met Duke Hadorious in the forest near Kurant City.

“Your Grace’s private soldiers is it? However.”

“—Certainly, from what I see in White Flame-dono right now, it is far too heavy a burden for them to do the job. However, you do not mean that you plan to seriously fight against me do you?”

“Ku...”

As Reiji expected, it was difficult for her to face a big noble, and Felmenia grit her teeth. No, it was already praiseworthy that she opposed him to the extent that she did. Because of her position, it was already impossible for her to fight against Hadorious.

If two nobles began fighting, it was reasonable to assume there would be some backlash. A war between nobles was something that one could find all throughout history after all. For two nobles who serve the same king and country to fight and start a power struggle wasn’t all that uncommon a story.

However, because there was no justifiable cause for such a fight, it would be

quite bad to wish for a battle between them. They already knew that the hero Elliot was being restrained, but without clearly knowing whether or not it was unlawful confinement, they couldn't use it as sufficient enough proof that he betrayed the country. If she started a fight with a big noble in that kind of situation, let alone the troubles she would bring her household, it could even be seen as a revolt against the unification of the country under Almadious. All regardless of what the Royal Princess herself thought. As Felmenia hesitated before the private soldiers, a hand solidly grasped her shoulder.

"Felmenia-jou, step back. I will take care of this. If it is me, there is no opponent I need to hold back against."

"Lefille... Sorry."

"That figure is, Alshuna's Shrine Maiden of Spirits is it?"

"Your Grace. If it is me, then I have no fetters that I need to worry about. Moreover, I have a personal grudge against you."

Felmenia stepped back and Lefille spoke sharply towards Hadorious. And in response, Hadorious looked at her curiously.

"I don't recall incurring your enmity though?"

"That time you set demons upon a certain trade corps, I just happened to be there as well and went through quite the terrible experience you see."

"I see. Certainly in that case you would have one or two grudges against me. However, it seems Shrine Maiden-dono's opponent will be that girl."

"That girl?"

A single shadow appeared from the formation of private soldiers. And that figure, was one that Felmenia and Lefille recognized.

"That is..."

"Thoria's hero..."

Wearing a robe, she had a sword ready in each hand. That figure which would not respond even if they called out to her was none other than the last hero that they faced off against back in the Alliance.

"As we thought, your Grace is connected to the Universal Apostles..."

“Fumu? I don’t know where you found out about that, but if you know that name, it means you have made contact with her before huh. Aah, that’s exactly right. I am one among those who has sided with the Universal Apostles. Among that group, I am known as Red Pain.”

As Hadorious plainly confessed his involvement, Reiji and the others were unable to hide their agitation. And then, Hadorious spoke up once more.

“With this, I do believe that you’ll face off against me, Hero-dono.”

Hadorious made that declaration like he was making a challenge, and suddenly Io Kuzami stood up next to Reiji.

“Shall I lend you a hand? Fiancé of mine.”

“No, I will take care of him myself.”

“Is that fine?”

“Un.”

As Reiji drew his orichalcum blade and took a stance, Hadorious made a delighted and fearless smile.

“So it has come to this. I am relieved that Hero-dono has the backbone to accept a challenge on his own.”

And then Hadorious thrust his sword into the ground.

“What...?”

Even though they were about to fight, it looked like he was being looked down on as Hadorious stabbed his sword into the ground. And right as Reiji was thinking such things, Felmenia, who was still racking her brains over having to take on the private soldiers, shouted out.

“Reiji-dono, do be careful! That is Duke Hadorious’ dancing sword style!”

And the instant her shout rang through the air, Hadorious stepped forward with graceful footwork.



—Rogue Zandyke was observing the hero summoned in the Alliance from a corner of his own shadow.

Within a room without windows, there were only candles to serve as a light source and the bare minimum required furnishings along with a single door. It was a complete dead end of a room. And locked up inside that room, the name of the hero who was remaining vigilant of her surroundings, was Hatsumi Kuchiba. With a fragile looking figure that looked like she would break if she was touched, she was still a young girl in her tender years.

However, paying attention to only her outward appearance like that was jumping to a hasty conclusion. No matter how much she looked to be a fragile young girl, the fighting spirit wrapped around her body was none other than that of a swordswoman. It was sharp enough that if one were to touch her, they would be cut down on the spot. It looked similar to what one of the other Seven Swords, the Twilight Beheading Princess Titania Root Astel held, but unlike her, she had none of that blood thirsty intensity emanating from her body.

For a swordsman, their body would definitely leak out killing intent. And in spite of that being an absolute certainty when they looked for a fight or were being vigilant, the girl right now was not in such a mental state.

The way she conducted herself, was like a perfectly clear mirror without a single smear, or a perfectly still body of water. Despite letting out fighting spirit, her blood thirst was completely shut out, and he could perceive no swaying emotions. In that case, even her movements would be unreadable.

She had clothing from the other world that had many frilly parts to it around her body. For the sake of fighting the demons, she held an elegant katana that she asked for from the dwarves in one hand, and her golden hair swayed with only the slightest movements.

There were no openings in her stance. Just like a perfectly clear mirror, she would reflect her opponent without erring. Like a still body of water where there was no way she would create waves on her own. To be unable to approach without causing ripples in the water, was the same as being unable to create any openings.

—And with such skills, Rogue was still working out how to keep her confined while evaluating her combat abilities. The master of the mansion had requested him to measure the abilities of any heroes that infiltrated the mansion, but...

(To think they would infiltrate this mansion so easily...)

The security of the duke's mansions was flawless beyond flawless. The private soldiers stationed at the mansion were all extremely skilled people. Even a single cat wouldn't be allowed to enter the premises. Even if Rogue attempted an infiltration, he would likely go through a fair share of difficulties. However, reality was different. Without even being noticed by the guards, they got in so easily.

Because of that, he couldn't confine them as he wanted to. The vigilance of the guards within the mansion had nothing to do with him. However, if another hero infiltrated the mansion to try and rescue Elliot, his role was to confine that hero and their companions while measuring their power. So one could say that he was being vigilant against heroes.

Therefore, the abilities of the one who was unaffected by any of the security, Suimei Yakagi, were as he thought, something to be highly valued. The fact that he used skills which peered into the abyss of magic that this world had never seen was something that was plainly evident.

(As I thought, it was right to entrust that child to him...)

Among the four people who infiltrated the mansion, Liliana was also present. That smart and diligent girl was likely lending that man a hand. And as he suddenly saw her face, he could see that life and hope had returned to it. From what he had seen, she had stopped using dark magic, and even more than that, he could not sense the power of the darkness that had gripped her without letting go at all. From the slight skin he could see under her eye patch, that brand that marked all mages who used dark magic without exception had completely vanished. He wouldn't doubt that she was released from that curse.

And thinking of that, he thought it would definitely be a threat to make an enemy of him.

However, thanks to her high abilities, it could be said that he was saved in a sense. If that man was also caught in his plan to confine them, he would have to face off against at least three of them, and the situation would be remarkably more difficult to deal with. He wouldn't be able to properly measure the hero Hatsumi's abilities, and they may have broken through immediately.

However, this time he was able to only stall only that one girl, so it could be said that it served his purpose well to an extent, but—

(To think she would charge in at me by her own accord...)

Rogue couldn't stop smiling at the unexpected event. It was not scornful, but the joy of a swordsman. Precisely because she sensed the fighting spirit of another swordsman, she stepped into this room all on her own. He couldn't help but smile. It was the highest honour he could receive.

In that case, as expected, that the heroes' abilities couldn't be underestimated. Especially when it came to the hero summoned in El Meide who was staying in this mansion, Elliot Austin, and the hero summoned in the Alliance before his eyes, Hatsumi Kuchiba, it could be said that the heroes summoned this time around had abilities which far surpassed the norm.

Normally, heroes were only recognized as vessels who were given the favour of the Goddess' power, and looking back at history that was certainly the case.

However, those two were different. Using only their original abilities, they were already able to fight against the demons, and they even possessed the power to overwhelm a demon general. Hatsumi Kuchiba was furnished with sword techniques which deviated from the laws of the sword, and on the other hand, Elliot Austin excelled not only with a sword, but with magic.

Because they had such abilities, the one to carry the burden of all of the Goddess' favour was decided to be the hero from the Kingdom, Reiji Shana, but—

“I can't see him...”

He could hear the hero's voice as she shook off her idle thoughts. Standing in the dead centre of the room, Hatsumi Kuchiba was perplexed precisely because she was all alone. However, 'I can't see him,' implied without a doubt that she knew of his existence. In that situation, it would be normal to think she was just locked in, but she could likely faintly sense the fighting spirit that Rogue was letting out. She was standing there with a sharp aura like she didn't mind at all when they would start, it was truly a fighting spirit like that of a glistening sword.

As if inviting Rogue to make his move, she was letting out her fighting spirit to the extent that the surround furnishings were making sounds like snapping hair and making a racket.

(This is certainly quite intense.)

The current situation pulled at his interest as a swordsman. It could have been his destiny as one who walked the path of the sword.

—As I thought, as a swordsman, I want to have a bout.

And it seemed to have been bad for that thought to suddenly pass through his mind. Sensing the hero's kill intent suddenly swell, he immediately jumped to another shadow to get away.

“There!”

“...!”

And just a moment later, Hatsumi Kuchiba made an exclamation as she swung her katana. And that slash came down exactly where Rogue was just before. It was likely that she sensed the subtleties of the slight movements of his heart.

Having clearly sensed the presence that she was unable to grasp up until now, Hatsumi Kuchiba corrected her stance where she was, and spoke out in a provocative tone.

“I don't know who you are, but you're quite good at hiding your spirit huh? It's quite admirable.”

“... It is an honour to hear such a thing from the Hero of Salvation.”

Judging that there was no more need to hide his existence, though he still hid his figure, Rogue at least spoke. After he honestly accepted her praise, Hatsumi Kuchiba straightened herself out as if showing proper respect.

“If you say it like that, then you probably already know who I am, but... Allow me to name myself once more as a swordswoman. My name is Kuchiba Hatsumi. If you have no objections, I would like to hear your name as well though?”

The hero gave out her name as would be common for a swordsman. Rogue had regrets about it, but he didn't give his name in return. And as he remained

quiet, a somewhat disappointed voice rang through the room.

“... So you won't give me your name, huh.”

“If it was a normal bout then complying would be my only wish, but in this case I cannot present myself as a swordsman. There is a hindrance in me doing so.”

“In that case...”

And then, she suddenly dropped her head sullenly, it was likely due to her disappointment. Just as she was looking in low spirits, in the next moment, Hatsumi Kuchiba explosively built up her fighting spirit in an instant—

“Then there's no reason to be reserved right!”

The moment she yelled out, she swung her katana from where she was standing. Rogue was positioned outside the range of that naked blade, but unexpectedly, he sensed danger from that horizontal slash whether he wanted to or not. Rogue stooped his hidden body low to the ground to deal with it, and he could hear the sound of the slash colliding with the wall behind him.

“—!!”

The swordswoman had her eyes closed as she stood in the lingering memory of the slash, taking his eyes off of her for an instant, Rogue looked at the wall behind him, and he could see a smooth cut in the wall as if a sharp blade passed through it.

“This is...”

Hatsumi Kuchiba's sword that he had rumours about. All of the Alliance swordsmen were astonished about her slashes which ignored range. Regardless of the length of her arms and weapon, it was a technique which judged everything beyond her slash and punished them by the justice of her sword. This is...

“Yes, this is the definition of a secret killing art.”

As if returning her praise from before, he let out a simple voice. However, that swordswoman didn't feel honoured by it at all, and Hatsumi Kuchiba made a self deprecating smile.

“No way? If you think this much is a secret killing art, you’ll topple over in surprise if you see my dad or someone else like that you know?”

Which meant, the father of the hero had far surpassed that slash. Rogue couldn’t sense any jest in her smile, and he could suddenly feel his muscles grow cold. It was like the feeling that any skilled warrior would feel running down their spine when they sensed danger.

“If that is not a bluff... Then it is quite the terrifying thought.”

“It’s true. It’s not like I’m crazy. He’s not like a certain someone, but he stopped being human already. More importantly—”

Saying that, she began looking around the room as if she was searching for something. And then...

“You’re technique to make you invisible is totally unreasonable, but... Doesn’t that kind of thing normally wear down gradually once your presence is found once? How are you doing it?”

“Even if you ask me, sorry, but I can’t reveal the secret you see.”

“Thought so.”

She likely understood the reasoning. Hatsumi Kuchiba did not prod any further and simply remained quiet. It should be obvious, but it was a tall order to talk about such a secret. If she wanted to know, she should ask with her sword and unravel it as they clashed. And it wasn’t something that could be unravelled so easily. He also had the conceit that she couldn’t unravel the mystery of his sword. He was who he was precisely because he cultivated that sword and magic.

... However, the opponent being who it was, he couldn’t say that she couldn’t turn the tables around on him. The hero with long golden hair, Hatsumi Kuchiba. Her clothes from the other world fluttered about as she strained her shoulders while she vigorously looked around the room. Without remaining still for a moment, she was earnestly moving around. Her movements were smooth and there was no awkwardness at all from one movement to the next.

—This seems like a job that will break my bones.

As that thought passed his mind, Rogue was unable to stop a smile from

coming up on his face.



In a closed room, being vigilant of the fighting spirit of an opponent she couldn't see, she kept her katana up at eye level at the ready.

The swordswoman from the Kuchiba school of the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani, Kuchiba Hatsumi, even after being thrown into such a situation, didn't let her heart get thrown out of order and harm her way of the sword as she earnestly endeavoured to become nothing but herself and her sword.

As the candlelight reflected off her myhril blade, her shadow swayed about matching its movements. It was likely that her opponent was hiding within those shadows, but since she wasn't a magician, she was unable to definitively identify his position. There were candles installed on all four walls of the room, so there were multiple shadows in every direction. She found the technique to hide within the darkness stretching across the floor to be greatly mysterious, but that was likely something that was reasonable for those who manipulated the mysteries.

The reason she charged in here on her own was because she sensed the presence of a swordsman. Because there was a fighting spirit that almost seemed like it was inviting her, her pride as a swordswoman was stimulated and she stepped forth.

However, after arriving, she couldn't see his figure, couldn't sense his presence, and he didn't desire a proper bout, so it ended up with the current situation at hand.

As a swordswoman, she was somewhat dissatisfied, but it could be said that this sort of thing wasn't bad either. From their brief conversation, she could tell that her opponent also had pride and conviction as a swordsman, and even if it wasn't a proper bout she believed he wouldn't do anything that strayed from the path.

In that case, even if he was defeated, he wouldn't have any regrets or hold any grudges. To be pulled towards an opponent who wished for a proper battle was something she could be thankful for.

(His voice... It's probably a sour old man huh.)

From what she heard of his voice, her opponent was likely approximately the same age as her father. It was ridiculous to compare it to that father who seemed to be abnormally youthful regardless of his age, but from the composure in his tone she could tell that he was quite diligent. Strength was something that could be known by each and every action one made. No matter how much fighting spirit she poured out, the other side had enough composure to laugh out without making any waves. Normally in such a situation, there would be a slight amount of trembling in one's voice, but there was none of that at all when he spoke.

Using provocation, she tried to create an opening in his heart, but she was being shut down and had been practically unable to grasp his position at all. However, it wasn't like she had no way of dealing with that technique which hid his body. It was something categorized in a special class in this world, but in her own world, there was certainly a sword style similar to the one her opponent was using whose foundation was based on invisibility.

“The Soundless Ancient Shadow School, the Ignorant Sword of the Flying Nightingale... It's better than having those flying swords jumping out at me huh...”

—The Soundless Ancient Shadow School. Just like the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani, it was one of the sword styles counted among Japan's Five Great Hidden Kings of the Sword.

Japan's Five Great Hidden Kings of the Sword. To escape the prohibition on the training of martial arts in the postwar period by the GHQ, they were unusual sword techniques which were hidden from the people of Japan, and secretly lived on to this day. Even after the prohibition was lifted, they did not reveal themselves to the world, and they were considered swords of the underworld.

From what she understood, they were:

The Severe Acala of the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani.

The Ignorant Sword of the Soundless Ancient Shadow School.

The Flying Swallow in the Skies of the Flying Supreme Law School.

The Quick Flaming Paired Swords of the Spirit of Illusionary Fire School.

The Icy Heavens of the Isolated God of the True Vision School .

And one among those, the Soundless Ancient Shadow School, was the one whose special characteristics she was reminded of and compared her current opponent's sword to.

“—The Soundless Sword is a completely silent style. Without presence or shape, fighting spirit or blood thirst, as if fired from a bow, a perfectly aimed thrust or strike would literally come flying.”

—The Soundless Sword was in a sense, a sniping sword style. At each and every turning point of the ages, it was the assassin's sword which consigned the villains who moved in the shadows of the world back to the shadows of oblivion. She had been told that at its extreme, it was a sword which seemed to fly in a single strike as it severed the head or pierced through the heart or bowels of its target without erring.

Unlike the Soundless Sword, there was no terrifying strike flying out at her. However, as the boundaries between the lights and shadows moved with the swaying of the candlelight, it would become a slash that came towards her. The fact that she couldn't see the sword itself was the same, in a sense, it would be fine to say they were similar.

(The Flying Nightingale drives the senses mad by messing with the timing and making its presence vanish, but conversely, this one's actual figure vanishes. In other words, as I thought, this technique is used together with magic from this world...)

While dodging the slashes, she thought of the possibilities in an instant. Since the presence vanished, there was a measurement error when she relied on her sense of vision and it did leave her a little out of order. However, the invisibility technique being used against her was not something that could be accomplished only within the scope of swordsmanship. On top of that, taking into consideration the sharpness of the strikes and the timing they came in at—

(My opponent is quite skilled. Could it be that he's about on par with me after

I received the divine protection of the hero summoning? What's with that, it's unfair...)

Though it was at her own convenience, she complained a bit in her mind. If one thought about it from the other side, she was the one who was cheating since she had a backup power source, but—being discontent and grumbling at the unusual strength of others was something anybody would do. However, what really didn't sit well with her in this situation was—

(Like I thought, he's holding back. There's no blood thirst in the strikes, this is probably the sensation of a wooden sword...)

Even though it was supposed to be a fight with real swords, the other side was letting out a fighting spirit that implied he had no intent to kill. On top of that, the slashes that she was catching had a subtle difference in weight and response from that of a metal blade. It was as if it was a bout in a dojo. Everything being thrown at her was nothing but a test.

It could be that he was simply stalling her from going towards Elliot. But since he didn't stand before the whole group, she couldn't earnestly make that conclusion. In any case...

“If that's the kind of intention you have, I'll have you get serious.”

“I'd like you to pardon me of that. If on top of Hero-dono, I also get serious, this won't end quite so simply.”

“Oh my? Even though your opponent is a hero that the people of this world seem to be putting their hopes in?”

“Of course.”

“That just makes me want to make you get serious even more.”

Hatsumi shifted from protecting herself from her opponent's sword to the offence. Passing by the sword slash which came from the boundary between shadow and light, she cut the shadow that it came from. And just like before, there was no feedback, but—

“Mu—?”

She at least was able to bewilder him. It was likely that he was confused about the blade supposedly crashing against something but looking like it

slipped right through. There was no mistaking that the moment the blade should have struck, he saw a hazy illusion of rust as it vanished.

—The Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani, Visions of Rust. Using her sharpened fighting spirit, it was a technique which created a false illusion making one's opponent lose sight of the true blade. The sharper a swordsman's senses were, the brighter the false illusion shined.

“This is, the blade...”

The swordsman in the shadows was unable to see through the logic of that sword and muttered in bewilderment. That was so to say, he was speaking unintentionally.

—The Visions of Rust created light similar to the green rust which showed on the surface of copper. To explain it simply, it was like the jade green dirt that showed up on ten yen coins or the surface of large Buddha statues.

That illusion which made one think of the lustre of iron flashed for a single instant and catches the eye, and then vanishes instantly making a hazy afterimage similar to copper rust. That was why the sword technique was given that name.

“You've got an invisible sword. I've got an unstrikeable strike. Now then, I wonder which is stronger?”

“Fu, fufufu...”

She could hear an amused voice. From that technique, there was no mistaking that his heart as a swordsman was triggered. Those who aspired towards the martial arts were unable to stop competing and testing each other. Just how far have I cultivated my own skill, and will this work against my opponent? Swordsmen were beings who always craved those thoughts.

—Her opponent's interest was piqued by her sword. The moment she saw through that, the words she chose was...

“My heart is the phantom of my sword's blade, and becomes the technique to break the three kleshas that poison the heart of man. Cast my body away like a rock, and give my life to the steadfast Kurikara...”

Calming her heart for a moment, she recited the dharani. It was originally used to call to Acala, but what she just chanted had no mystical powers. However, even so, because Acala was a wrathful Buddha, the god naturally inhabited swords. Because he was a king of wisdom, it is said that a possessed blade held the mysticisms of the truth.

Her heart was fully settled. Seeing that silence as an opportunity, the shadow moved from the flickering shadows.

The moment she caught that with her senses, she raised her blade that she laid down, and the sound of iron immediately assaulted her ears. Using both arms, she stopped the invisible weight. To evade being pushed back by that sword, she made use of the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani, the Dripping Snow.

Just like the snow accumulating on a tree branch caused the branch to spring back up as the snow fell, she loosened her strength for but a moment, and let her opponents sword slip down her blade. And then, putting her strength into her core, she unleashed her accumulated spirit, and let out a roar.

“HAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!”

From the slipping blade, she released all the power she had been accumulating. Twisting her arm, she greatly twirled around his sword and struck at the place where his right shoulder should have been. However, as expected, since she couldn't grasp his exact position, there was no feedback. A normal human's right shoulder would have been right there, but as expected, the shadow was nothing but a shadow. Her strike stopped with only the sharp sound of her blade cutting through the air.

Her posture had broken a little, but the candlelight wasn't swaying. Her opponent didn't carelessly come out. Because she was beginning to grasp his movements as he swung his sword at her, he likely couldn't pointlessly strike out any more.

She swung down her katana. The candlelight reflected off her blade, and a red line was drawn through the air, but as expected, he was being cautious and didn't stop the blade.

The way he danced around the candlelit room was just like a one man martial

arts demonstration. However, she had yet to feel the response of striking flesh.

In that case, she could only swing her katana until she cut into him. As long as she devoted her full concentration, she could cut even a drop of water or a pebble. And the technique she desired to accomplish that simple feat was...

“... Even if I cannot catch your figure, it can't be helped if I just cut down the whole room huh.”

With a bold voice, it was like the devil who supposedly brushed away the Acala resided in her body.

—The Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani, the Summit of Zen, the Long Sword of Enlightenment.

“HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

The slash which could even reach eternity, cut the room until its original form could no longer be recognized, and she simply earnestly continued to do so.



While they were searching the mansion, Hatsumi left behind the words ‘Go ahead,’ and vanished into a room of the mansion.

Something had attracted her attention. Even after Suimei and the others chased after her and entered the same room, she was not there. Perhaps she went further in, or perhaps she charged off to another location, she just suddenly vanished. Naturally, if they investigated, they could likely find her right away, but—

“Well, that would be a little boorish huh...”

Hatsumi went on her own. That was because she judged that she alone was sufficient. If Suimei just decided on his own that she was mistaken, no matter how he put it, it would be imprudent. Believing in her words that she would manage, Suimei turned around, and Titania called out to him with a wrinkle on her brow.

“Suimei, how is it?”

“It's just as you see. Let's go.”

“Go as in... Is it fine to continue like this?”

“Whether or not its fine, we came here for that reason right? We’re here to accomplish our goal of rescuing Elliot.”

“However, if we do that then Hatsumi-sama who disappeared will...”

Titania clung on as she showed concern for Hatsumi, and Suimei responded to her without any particular concern for her.

“Hatsumi will be fine. She’s faced down against demon generals in the Alliance. She won’t fall behind so easily. Besides, she charged ahead on her own too.”

Yes, she stepped forth on her own, Hatsumi was unexpectedly warlike. Normally she was quite calm and docile, but that part of her seemed to have been inherited from her father. The moment she saw a strong opponent, she would wish for a match. That will was exactly the same as her father Kiyoshirou—in other words, ‘If one doesn’t have a greedy craving, they won’t become strong,’ it was that kind of will that she properly possessed. However, Titania still couldn’t calm down.

“Is it not better for us to first search for Hatsumi-sama?”

“If it was that dangerous an opponent she would end up cutting down the whole mansion. Besides, it’s possible that before we find her, she might come charging back to us first you know?”

“The whole mansion, you say...”

“I don’t believe she can’t do it... Though it’s terrifying.”

Suimei stuck out his tongue and grabbed his shoulders as he trembled. He looked like he was joking, but what he said was the truth.

With a single swing of her katana, she could cut the entire three story mansion. Anybody one would ask would likely say it was impossible, but that was the true ability of those abnormal swordsmen. Hatsumi was a swordswoman who was acknowledged by that man who could split a skyscraper vertically with a single sword. Even if it was just parental favouritism, a mere three story mansion would be an easy feat for her.

In that case, it would be better to prioritize looking for Elliot. If they looked for

the people who were supposed to be searching just because they went missing, they would never be able to accomplish their goals, moreover...

“If that Hatsumi finishes what she’s doing and comes back to us and we still haven’t found him, I don’t know what she’s going to say to us either.”

“... Well, if it is fine with you then I will not say anything further.”

Letting out an astonished voice, Titania fixed up her sand repellent mantle and moved on. Suimei followed after her, but then he noticed that Liliana wasn’t coming along. As if she had something she was worrying about, she was glancing at the room Hatsumi disappeared in to.

“Liliana, what’s wrong?”

“... No, it’s nothing.”

“That said, you don’t seem calm at all you know?”

As he asked, Liliana tottered forwards, opened the door and looked deep into the room where nobody was present. And then, after confirming that there was in fact nothing there, she quietly closed the door. Liliana then began speaking.

“... Somewhere, I sense, a familiar presence, to the Colonel’s spell.”

“Rogue-san’s?”

“Yes. Somewhere, um, kind of like it has that atmosphere, or...”

She was unable to find the right words, and from those slight subtleties, Suimei could sense her sorrow from parting with Rogue being urged on. Her yearning for her foster father were deeply rooted, that was likely why she was able to react so shrewdly to his presence. Rather than having conviction, she stopped at saying it was just familiar though.

“What’ll you do? Take a look?”

“... No, let’s prioritize, the hero Elliot’s search.”

“Got it.”

In any case, they all decided on the current priority, and the talks of the room Hatsumi went in came to a close. And so, they began progressing down the corridor once more. Without being negligent, as they all proceeded while remaining vigilant of their surroundings, Suimei called out to Titania who was in

the front.

“Tia, do you know much about this mansion?”

“I have visited once before, but the interior has changed quite a lot since that time. It is likely that it was arbitrarily changed without the permission of the royal family, but... In general...”

She knew a bit about it. Since she was royalty, she likely knew the interiors of the mansions which belonged to the major nobles. Fundamentally, the construction of houses was based on the same standard, so they didn't deviate from one another all that much. However...

“Suimei, I don't have any way of identifying any hidden rooms. Do you have a way of doing so?”

“I've been looking into that since the beginning so it shouldn't be a problem. Rather, what's with there not being any spaces which seem like a hidden room...? There's only about the wine cellar in the basement.”

“Is that so? Then—”

The moment she was about to say something, Suimei's surveillance web caught on to a presence.

“Stop.”

“!?”

“...”

As he let out an cruelly chilled voice, Titania stopped in her tracks due to surprise. Naturally, since Liliana was used to Suimei's cold tone, she quietly slid a magic staff out of her sleeve. Dead ahead in the corridor, there was only a wall. Other than that, there was a bend towards the left.

“Is there, someone ahead?”

“Further past that bend. They don't seem to be moving, maybe they're lying in wait.”

“What, should we do?”

“Well, we can only go forward. We'll figure it out from there.”

If there was someone lying in wait, that meant the other side had noticed

their infiltration. There was a sense of unease about what they would do upon making contact, but as long as they didn't know who it was, they couldn't just attack first. They still didn't have firm resolution that they had just cause for trespassing, and even if they did find Elliot, depending on his treatment, it still wasn't clear whether they could use it as a cause. And since they were inside the mansion, there was a likelihood that there were others present other than just the private soldiers and guards.

In the worst case, if they attacked, it was possible their position would deteriorate. And that wasn't good. Naturally, Suimei already took defensive measures, so there was a sufficient margin for safety.

Just as Suimei said, as they came around the corner a human shadow came into sight. Quietly waiting in the centre of the passage, was a single maid with a taciturn expression. Seeing that figure, Suimei stepped forward in relief, but for some reason Titania held him back. After remaining quiet for a while, the maid spoke while maintaining the same expression.

"This is the mansion of his Grace the Duke Lucas de Hadorious. To enter its premises without the invitation of the master of the mansion, would you be some kind of robber or night burglar?"

As she asked in a rather thorny tone, Titania gave her a reply.

"I am the first royal princess of the Astel Kingdom, Titania Root Astel. If you still doubt the truth of my name from this outfit, then I shall have to prove my name with these two swords of mine, is that understood?"

The moment Titania named herself, her blood thirst poured out. The reason she let out her fighting spirit to prove her identity was likely because she was one among the Seven Swords. On the other hand, the maid understood Titania's identity from that majestic display of fighting spirit, and quietly knelt down on the spot.

"My deepest apologies your Royal Highness. I am but a simple servant in the employ of this mansion. I earnestly beg for your forgiveness for the lowly and imprudent behaviour of likening your Royal Highness to the likes of a night burglar."

"I have come here because I have heard that the Hero of Salvation, Elliot

Austin was present in this mansion. Is he here?"

Titania questioned her in a somewhat oppressive manner. She was likely implying that she would not back down so easily. In any case, in response to her question, she wasn't actually expecting to get a proper response, but...

"Regarding that matter, I have already been given orders by the master. Please come this way."

"Ah—?"

The maid with the taciturn face gave an answer that wasn't really an answer, but—they didn't think she would actually quietly guide them to him. Suimei and Liliana were also perplexed regarding her behaviour, but on the other hand, Titania kept her cool and complied with her behaviour, and began to follow after the maid. She then called out to the two others.

"Suimei, let us proceed."

"If you're fine with it then it's fine, but..."

Suimei was unable to clear all his suspicions away, but for the time being he decided to trust Titania and began walking. And then, he brought up his suspicions to the maid.

"So miss servant. What do you mean that you've already been given orders?"

"In the case that her Royal Highness Titania were to appear in the mansion, I was told by his Grace to hide nothing from her."

So she was told. As Suimei casually looked at Titania, he could see her squinting in dissatisfaction. She was on bad terms with the duke, but rather than being on bad terms, Suimei thought it was more like she was arbitrarily being hostile towards him all on her own."

"Did the duke already anticipate that I would come here beforehand?"

"It was nothing but an order on how to deal with the situation in the event that it happened. I was also surprised that your Royal Highness truly came in person."

And despite that, her brow did not budge in the slightest. She likely trained to maintain her composure as a maid.

“I see, that means he had already anticipated that we would infiltrate the mansion.”

He was keeping Elliot detained. So he could assume that someone would try and come to save him. Titania was always with Reiji, so she had a connection to the heroes. Thinking of it that way, Titania coming in person was one of the many possibilities.

However, in that case, it was completely strange that he would so easily let Elliot free. Without understanding what was going on, Suimei looked over to Liliana for an answer, but she only shook her head in return. And then, Suimei spoke in a quiet voice.

“... I don't really get it. They separated Hatsumi from us, but they're taking us to Elliot. It doesn't really feel like a trap either.”

“... I also, cannot get a read, on the situation.”

“... The fact that there's no consistency between his purpose and his actions is consistent at least...”

As the hazy understanding of the situation just grew more hazy, they eventually arrive at a room which appeared to be their destination. The maid knocked on the door, and the voice of a young man from within the room called back out to her. The voice was familiar, and from his tone, Suimei judged that he seemed to be fine. The maid then opened the door.

And there, was Suimei's objective, Elliot—sitting on a sofa, and sipping at a cup of tea. As he realized who had come, he put on his usual nihilistic smile and turned towards them.

“—I didn't think it would be you that would come here.”

“You look surprisingly healthy huh.”

“Aah. Just as you see, I've been treated hospitably.”

Saying that, Elliot brushed aside his golden hair in a pompous manner and waved his arm to the side in an exaggerated way. He was showing that he was perfectly fine. However, with that, everything became even more incomprehensible. As Elliot returned his cup to the saucer in a haughty manner, he corrected his attitude and showed courtesy to Titania.

“Your Royal Highness Titania. I must deeply apologize for causing you trouble.”

“No, it is good that Elliot-dono is in good health.”

After their short exchange, Suimei cut into the conversation.

“So? Why are you just quietly being taken care of here?”

“I have nothing else to do you see. I can’t get out of here.”

“You can’t get out? Why don’t you escape? You don’t look like you’re being restrained, and it shouldn’t be all that hard for someone like you to at least get out of the building right?”

“Certainly, if I put my mind to it I can do it. However, if I just disappeared arbitrarily, he threatened to bring harm to Christa.”

“I see. So you can’t take any action because of that.”

If they were separated, there was nothing he could do. Even if he wanted to protect her, he couldn’t. In any case, after Titania heard that, a vein popped out on her forehead, and her indignation was laid bare.

“He is dammed to think he could take a priest of the Salvation Church as a hostage.”

“That man doesn’t seem like a great noble who really has all that much faith after all.”

“So?”

“I was told I just had to wait here for a while. It’s annoying, but this was all I could do.”

“So, why is that?”

“Who knows? When they caught me, I was wondering just what they were going to do, but they’ve just been showing me hospitality normally without any inconveniences. Just what is he thinking I wonder? Obviously when I asked, they would never tell me.”

Even Elliot didn’t know what was going on as he groaned while shaking his head left and right.

(Was his goal only to keep him restrained? No, just what could he accomplish by doing that?)

Their goal was to only make it so that Elliot couldn't move. However, it didn't make any sense. If there was something that happened after he vanished, it would be—the first thing that would come up was the war against the demons. In that case, it meant they didn't want him to participate in the war.

“Now that I think of it, Hatsumi also said that she was stalled on the way didn't she?”

“But, the hero Reiji, was there?”

“Does that mean they wanted Reiji-sama to defeat the demons?”

Just as Titania said, if Reiji was on his own, it was possible enough that they wanted him to defeat the demons, but—

“No, that can't be it. In the end they made it look like he won. Those guys from the Universal Apostles came to help after all. Well, it would be a different matter if it was another force aside from the Universal Apostles though.”

“It looks like you gathered all sorts of information out there huh.”

“Well, we'll tell you later.”

But even so an answer didn't come to Suimei. If it was the Universal Apostles, Elliot's disappearance should have been linked to the kidnapping of heroes, but it didn't appear that way.

(Did the plan change along the way? The need to kidnap them vanished? But. It's like they inferred the timing...)

Suimei was deep in thought as he mumbled inaudibly, and Elliot then turned to the maid.

“So, is it fine for me to leave now?”

“Yes. Do as you will.”

“You're releasing Elliot-dono?”

“The master ordered me to do so. If it is Titania-sama's command, then he cannot disobey, so he said.”

“So his obedience to the royal family hasn’t changed, is it?”

As Titania let out a sigh, Suimei spoke to the maid next.

“Just what’s going on? What are you guys thinking?”

“I also have no clues regarding the master’s ambitions.”

“It’s not some kind of grudge against Astel right?”

“That would be impossible.”

“I thought so. The likes of that man wouldn’t lose control of himself like that.”

As Titania spoke in a somewhat sullen manner, Suimei looked at her with a doubtful gaze.

“... Even after he did something so incomprehensible, your trust in him is still deep huh.”

“I’d rather you say that I am a reasonable judge of character. Even if it is someone that I hate, I have the eyes to objectively evaluate them.”

“Those aren’t the words of someone who said something about discovering his evil deeds and thrusting it before him.”

“I wonder, did I say something like that?”

“Heeeh, heeeh, that’s quite the convenient brain you got there to not remember that~.”

As he called out Titania sarcastically, Suimei shrugged his shoulders. Well, with this, they accomplished their objective. They had a surplus of leisure to do what they needed to do now, but—

“Tia, take care of Elliot. I’m going outside.”

“What are you going to do outside?”

“I also at least have a grudge to settle. I thought I’d clock him once and ask a few questions. It looks like it already started outside too.”

“It started? But that sort of presence...”

“It seems like they’re making it so you can’t really tell. This is likely the work of the guy Hatsumi chased.”

Suimei already sensed that the battle outside had started. Since a large

number of people were moving, it likely meant that Hadorious' personal soldiers were put into action. As Suimei turned his back to them, Titania called out to him.

“In that case, include my portion as well, and give him two clockings please.”

“OK, leave it to me. Until I'm done, take it slowly. Then, Liliana, I'll leave the rest to you.”

“Yes.”

And just as Suimei was about to leave, Titania suddenly called out to him once more.

“Suimei, since you also use a sword, allow me to warn you beforehand, if you plan on confronting the duke with a sword, do be careful.”

“What, is that big shot noble strong?”

“Lucas de Hadorious is at the summit of the Seven Swords. He is the strongest swordsman in this world.”

“... Ha?”

While making an idiotic expression, Suimei looked towards Liliana, and she nodded as she replied.

“Duke Lucas de Hadorious, is the man who reigns over the peak of the Seven Swords. In other words, he is the strongest swordsman, in this northern continent.”

“Y-you guys!! Tell me that kind of crap earlier!!”

As he yelled back out at them, Suimei ran off towards where Hadorious was facing off against Reiji.

Chapter 3: The Strongest Swordsman of the Seven Swords, and the Modern Magician

A little before Suimei's group found Elliot, in the garden of the Hadorious mansion...

“—As I thought, Hero-dono's sword is still immature it seems.”

“Ku...!”

As that voice mixed with disappointment was bestowed upon Reiji, an extremely bitter taste ran through his mouth. In the middle of their fight, those words that implied Hadorious was testing him came down on Reiji who was down to a knee tasting humiliation.

Reiji did not underestimate him. There was no way he was making light of the situation. And in spite of that, in spite of carrying himself like the hero given the divine protection of the Goddess, Hadorious stood there with a refreshing look as he spoke ill of Reiji like it was mere child's play.

And the outcome was just that, without even a clean stroke of a sword, Hadorious was able to pour it down on him like that. When Reiji attacked, he would evade the strike and not ever bother to stop the blade. Conversely, when Reiji was on the defence, he was completely unable to dodge, and it took all his effort just to stop those strikes. On top of that, despite not having been struck on his body even once, Reiji's legs were already at their limits.

And the reason for that, was Hadorious' diverse sword techniques. It all started when Felmenia yelled out the words sword dance, and it continued with intense herculean strength, refined form, and magic spells. And all of those ended up putting Reiji in an inferior position and left him with a bitter taste in his mouth.

The lightning that had been clad around Hadorious' sword dispersed, and as the light from the mana lamps illuminated it, he began to scrutinize it like a work of art. Was it a chip in the blade? Or maybe he was checking it for the cloudiness of his own heart. Before long, he finished observing it, and turned to Reiji.

“All of your victories up until now were likely attained only by relying on your gift. However, when you stand before one with experience and skill, the plating cracks so easily like hardened lacquer and crumbles. Just like this.”

He was treating the power of the Goddess as plating. No, he certainly had a point. The power that was filling Reiji’s body right now was not something he acquired on his own. However, precisely because of that...

“Is that something someone from the country who summoned me should say?”

“Isn’t it obvious? If you misunderstood it for your own power, then it is the obligation of the people from the country who summoned you to rebuke you. To simply be at peace from being worshipped is practically a sin.”

—Of course, it seems you have no relation to pride at all though.

Saying that, Hadorious gave his evaluation of Reiji that he arrived at during the fight. And then...

“Hero-dono. How is it? The Goddess’ power? Have you gotten used to it?”

“What does that matter right now?”

“It matters. If you have gotten used to it, then it means that you have degraded to the Goddess’ pawn just that much.”

“A pawn, you say?”

“That’s right. This was something I had already told you before, but—the demons’ existence itself, is a grand existence whose purpose it is to bring about the ruin of all races including humans. Do you remember that I wonder? That answer that you received from that demon general known as Rajas after you asked what meaning there was in killing each other when everyone was a living being?”

“... That’s.”

Reiji had asked Rajas why the demons attacked humans, why mutual living beings had to kill each other. And when he spoke to Hadorious, he was told ‘That question has no meaning.’ At that time, he didn’t understand what he was being told, but—

“That’s right. Because of that, there was no meaning to your question. If the demons were created by the Evil God only to kill, then there is no way that we could coexist is there? This quarrel which threatens all races who inhabit this world including humans, is nothing more than a struggle for exclusive possession of the world using the board known as the world, and the pawns of the Goddess and Evil God known as the heroes and demons.”

“A board... Pawns...”

Hearing Hadorious’ words, Reiji was suddenly able to remember something. That was what happened at the end of the battle with the demons in the Empire, when Suimei and Lishbaum were talking. The demons were pawns of the Evil God, and to make those pawns stronger, they had to reduce the number of weaker demons. Yes, just like a strategy game.

“...”

Realizing that coincidence, Reiji was halfway dumbfounded as Hadorious seemed to have seen through what was going on in his heart.

“From the looks of it, it seems that even if it is only a little, you seem to have a clue as to what I am saying.”

“That’s—”

“—Do not flap your gums so much as you chatter about unnecessary things, human.”

“Io Kuzami-san!”

Slipping through a gap in Hadorious’ private soldiers, Io Kuzami inserted herself between Reiji and Hadorious. Reiji didn’t know why she spoke like she had become indignant about something that couldn’t be overlooked, but—

“Hero-dono’s friend... No, I see, you’re...”

“Take this!”

“I won’t let you interfere!”

As Io Kuzami closed in with mana accumulated in her right hand, Hadorious shouted out as he pulled a gem out of his breast pocket and threw it at her.

“Ku, this is...”

Io Kuzami attempted to twist in the air and evade it, but the gem grazed her shoulder as it continued to fly out behind her. It didn't look like she had received much of a shock from that single attack, but Io Kuzami fell to her knees in bewilderment. And then, Hadorious turned back towards Reiji once more.

“How is it Hero-dono? The feeling of knowing just what you are?”

“—!? Are you saying that I'm nothing but a pawn that's being manipulated!?”

“Precisely.”

“!?”

“If it was not the case, then just where were those ‘feelings of wanting to save the people of this world,’ that you hold so dear born from? Just where did they stem from?”

“That, is...”

Because he was asked to save them. After being summoned to this world in the Royal Castle Camellia, they begged him to subjugate the demons. Since he had acquired power, he felt like he had to do something. Even if he was in high spirits from being called a hero, it was without a doubt something that came up from his own mind, it was properly his own will.

“I felt that I wanted to save the people of this world! That is my own intent!”

“Is that not just what you want to tell yourself?”

“You're wrong! I took up a sword to fight of my own will! I'm not being manipulated!”

Reiji yelled back at him. However, Hadorious shook his head to the side in exasperation.

“... El Meide's Hero-dono understands the truth much better I see.”

“What, does that...”

“The time for questions has ended, Hero-dono. It is about time that we continue our dance.”

Hadorious took his stance. However, unlike before, he didn't wrap his sword in lightning using magic. Was he intending on holding back? However, the fighting spirit oozing out of his body was the same as before, and he had no

openings. And once more, he thrust his sword into the ground.

“... Let’s start.”

Just as Reiji thought Hadorious body was swaying and tilted over, he smoothly pulled his sword from the ground and a rising slash came in towards Reiji. Because he knew where the slash was coming from, it would be fine just to dodge it, but if he did so poorly and it went against his predictions, that sword would stretch out and cut him to pieces. Since he didn’t catch that on the first strike of the fight, he dashed in a poor attempt to evade, and was granted a single line of blood on his cheek.

“Ku...!!”

Hadorious spun around like he was dancing, and the moment he finished swinging his sword, he thrust it back into the ground with the same vigour, and pulled it out once more to attack. The speed of his slash was terrifying, and it was all Reiji could do just to catch its trajectory.

(Why... Why is he able to do this so quickly despite stabbing the ground?)

The action of stabbing the ground was unmistakably an opening. However, despite it being an opening, Reiji couldn’t put in any offence. Even if he slashed at him by sensing when that sword would be stabbed into the ground, Hadorious would gracefully turn to the side as if he knew exactly what would happen. And after dodging Reiji’s sword, he would make use of the opening made from Reiji’s sword cutting nothing but air.

His sword also wasn’t one where he just waited and counterattacked. After greatly increasing the distance, he would step forth with composure as if he was stepping into a party hall, stab his sword in front of him, and then with gestures like a dance, he would attack furiously.

It was as if he was showing proper manners while asking for a dance, showed every courtesy, and as Reiji thrust out his sword as if responding to that request, he danced with his sword like he knew exactly what would happen next.

“Why...?”

As Reiji’s doubts inadvertently leaked out his mouth, Hadorious replied.

“It is nothing mysterious. One who has no elegance in their body is simple immature as a swordsman. Thus, as you know nothing of that logic behind the path of the sword, you move about in confusion. It is nothing more than that.”
“Elegance...”

Reiji didn't understand the meaning behind that word. Elegance was nothing but aesthetics. Just what would he understand from having something like that? Why would that make him able to deal with that sword?

Hadorious' dance grew more intense, and as Reiji endured the continuous strikes with his sword, he was suddenly struck by the sword's pommel from below.

“Cra...!?”

From that single strike from below, Reiji let go of his orichalcum sword. And his opponent wasn't one to let such an opening go.

“Take this strike as a warning about your own immaturity.”

Hadorious brandished his sword. It was the preparation to make a strike, and Reiji was unable to evade. It had a speed and sharpness that wouldn't permit evasion, and by its authority, Reiji gave himself in to that slash.

“—Ku!!”

“Reiji-dono!”

“Reiji-kun!”

“Tch! Reiji!”

Felmenia and Lefille yelled out, and just as Io Kuzami once more tried to cut in between them...

“—Elegance huh. Well, that's something like what father would call 'romance' huh. In any case, the reason Reiji's sword can't reach is cause 'he doesn't have the skill to keep up with the dance,' right?”

From behind Hadorious, that refreshing voice rang out. Those words seemed to have found something that Reiji was unable to find. And at the same time, a sharpened stone came flying in at Hadorious.

“Ku, who is it!?”

Hadorious turned around with challenging words. And the one who was there, was...

“Who? Me? I’m friend number one of that hero over there. At the very least, you also remember my face right?”

The one who was standing there, was Suimei, wearing the clothing from this world. Just where did he come from? Wearing his green jacket, without any signs of any doors or windows opening, he soundlessly appeared without putting on airs at the subtleties of his arrival. The stone that flew out also manifested suddenly, and it was just like he was always there.

“You’re...?”

“Suimei-dono!!”

It seemed like Hadorious didn’t recall Suimei’s face, even after being told, he didn’t seem to have a clue, but—after hearing Felmenia shout, he made a bewildered expression.

“Suimei...? Suimei Yakagi... You say? Why are you here?”

“Why you say, I came to rescue the hero.”

Hearing those words, the crease in Hadorious’ brow deepened. It was like he couldn’t grasp at all that Suimei had infiltrated the mansion. And as expected, that must have been a boon of Suimei’s magic.

“I see. Hero-dono was a distraction, and then you snuck into the mansion was it? However, I’m surprised you managed to get through all that security.”

“Well, with only that much, yeah.”

Saying that, Suimei burst into laughter frivolously. Seeing his lackadaisical behaviour, Hadorious seemed to find the interruption all the more displeasing. As if the mood was killed, his expression distorted, and he scowled at Suimei.

“However, it is troublesome if you get in the way of my match with Hero-dono. You should quickly step away.”

“Don’t be so cold, let me join in. You’re a big shot noble right? Show me the generosity of one who holds a domain.”

“I don’t have anything to show to one of the masses like you. Second squad! To the front!”

Hadorious let fly his orders to the private soldiers who were facing off against Felmenia and Lefille. And as he did, a portion of those soldiers who were holding the girls back split off, and headed towards Suimei. In response to that, Suimei acted like he was exasperated as he always did, shrugged his shoulders in an exaggerated manner—and then started cracking his knuckles.

“My goodness, saying one of the masses is quite the way of talking huh... Aaah, no, it’s the same as always huh. Yeah yeah, my apologies for having such a mediocre face~”

“Suimei! Now isn’t the time to be saying that! Put some—”

“Nope, there’s no reason to get motivated at this level.”

Even before the soldiers closing in on him, even when Reiji gave him a warning, Suimei smiled like it was nothing at all. It wasn’t a joyful smile, but a fearless one as if he was sneering at them for challenging him or because of their imprudence. It was something Reiji had never seen before, a coldhearted smile.

In an instant, a flash radiated like lightning from behind Suimei. Immediately following that, a dazzling ultramarine brilliance was created in the blink of an eye, and many tiny magic circles lined up systematically behind him.

“Wha—!?”

“This is!?”

Those synchronized surprised voices came from Reiji and Hadorious. There was around fifty tiny magic circles lined up behind Suimei. Each and everyone one of them had an abnormal formula imprinted in them, and each and everyone of them was gathering mana in their centre like a gun battery.

It looked a lot like a fort of magic circles with gun barrels and gunners. And all that was left was for the practitioner’s raised right hand to swing down—

“—Adcentum transcirption. Augoeides randomizer Trigger.” (Brilliant spell simplified operations. Randomly deploy bombs from number one to fifty.

Strategic bombing.)

The moment that chant reached the air and he swung down his arm, just as Reiji thought those magic circles were letting out their luminescence once more, fifty rays of light shot out and rushed towards the soldiers standing in Suimei's way. Unlike the transparent lights one could see from a flashlight in the other world, those rays looked like dense pillars as if they were flickering spears. Reiji did not even need to imagine what would happen if someone was struck by one of those.

And as the lights made impact, a series of explosions of light followed. The place the soldiers were standing in was already bursting with a dazzling light and a large amount of sparks. One could not even be certain what was happening in that disastrous scene.

And following that... The scene in front of Reiji's eyes sent chills down his spine, and he couldn't move his body at all. It was natural. If he stepped in carelessly, he would be exposed to the incessant barrage and flying sparks. It could be said that it was wise for him not to move.

As the pandemonium settled down, before long, after the after image in their eyes that was like they were staring at a strobing light vanished, every single one of the soldiers who took action to block off Suimei had collapsed on the spot.

They had no wounds that stood out, but their armour was burnt and falling apart. It wasn't hard to imagine that they were struck by a significant force. Without paying any attention to the soldiers who weren't even twitching on the ground, Suimei put on a fearless and provocative smile towards those who hesitated to move. He then stuck out his hand and curled his finger towards himself as if telling them 'Come and get it.'

—You're all worthless. Nothing will change no matter how many of you there are.

As Suimei's attitude implied this, the soldiers who understood that rushed in with rage. As they closed in towards Suimei quickly, they lunged out with their swords and spears. However, he jumped up and evaded the many blades, and snapped his fingers.

It was a casual and graceful finger snap. Accompanying that sound, the air in front of him exploded, and a few of the soldiers were blown away by the shockwave. Suimei jumped into the broken line of soldiers carelessly, and landed right in the middle of all them. And then, placing his right hand on the tiles of the garden floor, he let out a tremendous amount of mana all at once.

—If mana was not used for magic, its effect as an attack would be small. However, with such an explosive amount, even the mysteries in the surroundings would run wild, and the ether pressured to the limit would cause an explosion.

Reiji did not know that law which was behind Suimei's attack. As that explosion which threatened the heavens rang out, not only the soldiers but even Suimei was swallowed in flames—and eventually, the fire and smoke was blown away by an unnatural wind and vanished.

And what showed, was a magician who was all of a sudden wearing a black suit. As he swung his arm as if brushing away the embers born of the explosion like they were flies, he let out a bored sigh.

(This is...)

Before that disastrous scene that played out right in front of Reiji's eyes, Reiji couldn't find any words to describe the abilities of his good friend who created such a scene. All of that—every part of it, was beyond his imagination. He was also taken aback when Felmenia used magic from that world, but what he just saw easily leaped over that.

When he heard of magicians, when he heard the stories from Felmenia and Lefille, though it was only a little, he thought he had an understanding of the extent of that power. Suimei used techniques different from the people of this world, and using that, Felmenia became stronger. That's all he thought. However, when he opened the lid to take a look, how did it turn out? He realized that the scale used to measure those abilities was wrong in the first place.

At that time, Suimei correctly sensed that the reason Reiji was worrying about the difference between realities and dreams was because 'It's a different world.' He said that in response to Reiji's feelings of reality towards 'The death

of the people of this world.’ Those words certainly rang true for Reiji, and Suimei had said it was the same for him.

However, those shared feelings he thought they had were completely crushed right here. Would someone who could fight to such an extent truly think of this world and that world as ‘different?’ If the main cause of thinking it was all a dream was based on the degree of detachment from reality, then to him, this world and that one would be the same. Just by the fact that he was able to fight in such a violent way, that ‘sense of reality’ that Reiji lacked could be said to be easily imaginable as reality itself to Suimei. In that case—

(Just how dangerous, is our world—)

It was likely a place filled with the stench of blood. Reiji couldn’t help but be compelled to think that way. Just where in that peaceful world was that kind of thing hiding? He couldn’t believe it. He couldn’t believe it, but precisely because his good friend had definitely been fighting in that place, he was able to fight like that. Reiji had just realized this, and for some reason, laughter spontaneously filled his heart.

“You know Suimei, that’s kinda unfair.”

“Ah? You sure can talk for someone who came to this world and got stupid strong right away. It makes me look like an idiot for spending twelve years doing it straightforwardly.”

Suimei glared daggers into Reiji as he cursed him. That attitude of his was the same as always, but the amount of cynicism in his voice was more than normal, so it felt a little different. This was the side of him that was a magician. And then...

“Menia, Lefi, are you alright on your end?”

“I’m okay! Suimei-dono, do not mind me and support Reiji-dono!”

“I’m also alright! There’s no problem just keeping them restrained!”

“Got it! Then sorry but I want the two of you to push the rest of those guys all the way over there! They’re in the way if they’re scuttering around here!”

After Suimei made that request to Felmenia and Lefille, the two of them seemed to have no trouble in complying. Using red wind and white flames,

Thoria's hero and Hadorious' private soldiers were pushed back as if to keep them away, and they all moved so that nobody could get in Suimei's way. On the other hand, Suimei threw a cold gaze over to Hadorious.

“So? Is that all for the opening performance? Despite treating people like small fry, that was quite the poor display wasn't it? Right, mister big shot duke?”

When Reiji took a look, the composed face that Hadorious had on up until now changed into one of surprise. Just like Reiji, he couldn't believe the extent of Suimei's abilities—no, he may have actually not even believed that Suimei had enough power to even fight. As proof of that—

“... Ridiculous. Setting aside the magic which didn't appeal to the elements, to think you can even fight... Weren't you a coward who held no power...?”

Seeing his surprised expression, for some reason Suimei suddenly made an idiotic expression.

“Aah~, I see~, that's how it is huh~. Well I guess you're also from Astel huh, so you had that kind of impression of me huh...”

The people of Astel had been bad mouthing Suimei as a coward who couldn't fight. Of course that was because Suimei had been hiding it, so even Hadorious had no opportunity to learn of his abilities.

“... I see, so that means you deceived each and every person in Astel?”

“Oi oi, can you not say something that makes me sound like the bad guy? Rather, I don't wanna hear that kinda crap from you. Going off and sending an entire fucking army of demons at other people, it was quite the chore to beat the shit out of all of them you know?”

“Then, you're the one who... I see, the man in black that the demon general was yelling about...”

As if responding to Hadorious' suspicions, Suimei flung open the black coat on top of his suit with a thud. And in that instant, a strong wind broke out causing the hedges to shake and rustle. At the arrival of a mystical existence, the power in their surroundings lost their equilibrium, and the mana lamps began to flicker unnaturally. And then...

“That’s right, the one Rajas yelled out at in resentment was me. The name of a magician of the Society, Yakagi Suimei—”

And the moment he said that, a chill in the air that felt like it could penetrate one’s bones was directed at Hadorious.



After Suimei forced his way into the fight between Reiji and Hadorious, he

released the mana that was lying in the depths of his body, and relieved Reiji to face off against Hadorious.

He was firing out mana, fighting spirit, and all the lingering anger that he had been building up. As if throwing the kindling labelled 'Doing nothing but fucking around with others...' into the fires of his heart, the pressure he let out grew stronger and stronger.

As for Hadorious who was facing off against him, he was still gripped with surprise from the fact that Suimei was a magician, but perhaps because he properly grasped the situation and still had some composure, his expression returned to the one he had when he fought against Reiji.

“Very well, Suimei Yakagi. It just means that I lacked an understanding of you.”

“And that blunder, I wonder just how it will tighten around you neck?”

“Shut that impertinent mouth of yours. All it likely means is that the number of opponents in this bout has increased.”

“Bout... huh.”

As Hadorious shut down any more frivolous talks, he broke into a dash and drew the sword he had thrust into the ground as he slashed forth. Suimei jumped back at the sense of danger and fighting spirit from those actions and his sword, and a shockwave ran past him.

As he took a peek behind him, he could hear sounds of the shockwave colliding and the sound of the slash tearing things apart on top of each other. The tiles and earth on the ground were torn to shreds in a straight line. Of course, it wasn't Hadorious sword that did that.

“Oi oi, this guy... Using a sword wave? On top of that, what destructive force...”

—Sword wave. It was a sword technique different from the Long Sword of the Morning Sun, the slash which Hatsumi used which could ignore range. Originally, it made use of a whirlwind which broke out at the tip of a quick slash. Throughout history, it was considered a technique which used the authority of a slash to send a bank of clouds flying.

“Suimei! That’s not all there is to the duke’s sword!”

“Heeh?”

Learning that the number of performances were varied, Suimei’s mouth suddenly curved upwards. And while showing a fearless smile, he pulled out a vial from his suit pocket, and took hold of his own sword.

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

And as he did, Reiji suddenly yelled out.

“S-Suimei!? Isn’t that mercury!?”

“Hm? What about it?”

“What about it!? Isn’t it bad to touch it directly!?”

“Ah—”

Just as Reiji’s anxiety indicated, mercury was a deadly poison. At a normal temperature it would let out a volatile smoke that would be absorbed over time, and was toxic. When they used a thermometer at school it was something they would be cautioned about, but—

“I’m doing something about it with magic~. It’s OK~.”

“A-anything goes with magic huh...”

“Well, this much is nothing though.”

And in a complete turn from the complex expression Reiji was making...

“I mean... Setting that aside Suimei! Look out! The duke can use magic on his...”

And before Reiji could finish speaking, Hadorious stepped in. And as if playing out that exact hand, he muttered something as his sword was clad in green lightning. As the sword crackled with sparks and lightning, Suimei flicked his extended mercury sword as if shaking off blood from it and brandished it forwards, awaiting Hadorious’ arrival.

“Fuu—So it isn’t just sword techniques huh.”

“Of course. You’re not the only one who can use magic techniques.”

As Hadorious spoke while swinging his sword, Suimei dealt with it by immediately using counter magic. A tiny magic circle was pierced by his mercury katana, and as the circle sat deep on the blade, when the two swords approached each other, in an unexpected turn, the mercury katana was repelled by the jumping lightning.

“Wha...!?”

“Fu—”

With the trap Hadorious set up, this time it was Suimei who was compelled to be surprised. However, Suimei was one who knew about swordsmanship. In response to that sword which continued to lunge out, he evaded by an adequate margin and escaped the slash. And in response to the noble who was making a faint smile, Suimei knit his brows.

“Its not, enchantment...?”

And he muttered to himself in bewilderment. Just as Reiji had tried to say, it looked like the lightning was clad around his sword. However, why did the corresponding spell that nullified enchantment have no effect? So just what was it that Hadorious put in use? As Hadorious once more swung his sword as if dancing, Suimei put out his golden shield instead of his sword.

“Primum ex Secondom Excipio!” (Number one and two rampart, Local Deployment!”

“Mu—Magic defence is it!? However—”

“Haa!? Oioioioi...!”

Just as the sword met the shield, Suimei felt an irrepressible shock at the scene before his eyes. Just why was the tip of that sword clad in lightning sinking into the magic circle? It was just like the light given off by the magic circle was being chipped away little by little.

“Tch, it’s even shaving away at the fortress’ defences...!?”

It was likely that on top of the mysteries, the fighting spirit he held as a swordsman was adding to its power and overwhelming Suimei’s defences. And to put some distance between them for the moment, Suimei muttered out a chant. As he did, the golden magic circle began to rotate, and blew away

Hadorious, but—without having his posture broken at all, he gallantly landed on the ground at a distance. The rampart of the golden fortress remained in place, and protected Suimei against the sword waves as Suimei guessed as to what Hadorious' technique was.

“What’s going on? That just now wasn’t enchantment...?”

Among the techniques which used mystical powers in other fields, the first to come up would be enchantment. Enchantment used mana and a spell to sympathize with a sword, and it could be thought of as a phenomenon which augmented the destructive force of sword strikes. However, Hadorious' sword strike chipped away at the number two rampart which defended against magic.

If it was enchantment, that would be impossible. In that case, just what did it mean? While vigilantly focusing on the opponent before him who he couldn't be careless with, Suimei let his thoughts run about. However, an imprudent conjecture would be an extremely poor move. Since he had no precise materials to work with, any judgment he made would just be conjectures. In any case, while Suimei was thinking, against all odds, the one to throw him a clue was Io Kuzami.

“—That’s wrong, Yakagi Suimei. He is not bestowing his sword with magic.”

“It’s, wrong?”

“That’s right.”

Suimei corrected his posture and held his mercury katana back up as he looked at Hadorious. His sword was clad in green lightning earlier—but it vanished.

“Ah? It vanished?”

If it was enchantment, as long as the supply of mana was sufficient, it wouldn't disappear. However, as if this one was only a temporary effect, it just died out. And it seemed Io Kuzami knew what it was.

“To use the words from your world, that would be something like ‘possession’ wouldn't it?”

“Possession... I see! That’s what it was...!”

And from that hint, a revelation swooped down upon Suimei. Possession. If it

was something that used spiritualism, it wasn't something he didn't understand. And the instant he realized, to put it to the test, Suimei's rampart vanished. Seeing the rampart vanish, Hadorious raised his eyebrow lightly, but he seemed to accept the invitation, and quickly closed in.

All that was left, was to match the timing. Since his opponent was a swordsman, he had to take into consideration the speed he could go from his initial to maximum velocity, or else it would be inevitable that he would be cut down without being able to do a thing. Bearing in mind that if he missed the right opportunity he would be cut clean in two without being able to dispel the mystery before him, Suimei gripped his mercury katana. Hadorious once more clad his sword in lightning. Pitching his body over, Suimei focused his eyes as a magician. Seeing through the rising slash that could compare to even Reiji's slash, Suimei struck the rising blade with his own.

—And just as the high pitched clang of metal hitting metal rang out in the air, he muttered...

“—Return woman, back to whence you belong.”

“Mu!?”

And the surprised voice that came out in response to the chant which drove away the female form, was as expected, Hadorious'. As Suimei muttered that chant, the moment his magic activated, the green lightning that was wrapped around Hadorious' sword vanished in an instant.

However, only the lightning vanished. Without wavering, Hadorious immediately repelled Suimei's mercury katana with sheer strength, but—Yakagi Suimei was a magician. He naturally had no reason to be finicky about his sword. Using the opening created when Hadorious took the time to fling away the mercury katana, Suimei splendidly thrust out his hand with a snap.

“Guoh...”

Snapping at the air in front of his eyes, a shockwave burst out, and ether wind scattered. And Suimei remained there with his fingers held out right in the middle of the aftermath of the explosion. Since Hadorious took the attack magic at point blank, he was blown back all the way to the hedges.

Hadorious should have taken the full brunt of the shockwave, but he immediately shook his head and corrected his posture. Perhaps the hedge behind him saved his body from too much damage. Though he was also quite sturdy to begin with. In any case...

“I see. It’s not like you were using enchantment to add magic to your sword. You brought down a phantom of the elements to your sword, and made use of its power right? Ha—Despite being a swordsman, to think you have a foundation in spiritualism, you sure showed me quite the strange skillfulness there didn’t you.”

As Suimei praised Hadorious with a slightly provocative tone, Hadorious’ face became grim. Naturally, this expression was not because of Suimei’s insolent tone, but because his explanation was correct.

“... To think you would see through my secret art so easily. However, just because you can seal it, does not mean that you have broken my sword you know?”

“Thought so. But—”

Saying that, Suimei launched a brightness spell at Hadorious. Obviously, this was not to prevent Hadorious from attacking, but to make him evade.

“Even if I can’t beat you with a sword, I’m a magician you see. Sorry but I don’t feel like fighting in your arena at all you get it? Rather, Reiji, isn’t it about time you move? We can finally fight two on one here right?”

“I-I see! You’re right...”

Reiji finally realized that fact, and lined up next to Suimei in a fluster. Suimei couldn’t tell whether he was being absentminded, was just fascinated by the battle, or whether his exhaustion was getting to him. So for the meantime, Suimei muttered out a spell for healing.

“U-uwa...”

As a green magic circle rose up at Reiji’s feet, the breath of the land blew. And as his body was wrapped in that gentle breeze, the green magic circle became threads of light and vanished together with the wind—and Reiji returned to his condition before receiving any wounds.

“This is, restoration magic!? Amazing, my wounds, in an instant!”

“It’s healing magic. Besides you didn’t have any major wounds, so it ain’t that amazing. I’m not a specialist in this field either.”

Suimei put on a smile as he spoke. And then, they were now in perfect condition to fight.

“As one would expect, I’m at a disadvantage against you two... However.”

Even before the two of them, Hadorious didn’t seem to have any intention of backing down, and he once more corrected his posture with his sword at the ready. However, his fighting spirit was overflowing more than it was before. This was the mettle of a swordsman faced with a hurdle. Due to the sense of impending danger, they could see an illusion of Hadorious’ body appearing two, three times larger than normal.

“... Looks like he’s finally motivated huh.”

“Seems so. So this is him when he’s serious...”

From the overflowing fighting spirit, they could tell that he was holding back during their fights to a certain extent. Since the fighting spirit he was letting out was at the physical limits, the hedges were snapping one after the other and the broken fragments of tiles on the ground were dancing around as they clattered.

“—It would be troublesome if you had forgotten about me.”

And with a haughty tone, Io Kuzami drew nearer, and in response to her, Suimei...

“What, you were here?”

“... Bastard, despite lending you aid in that great battle you dare speak like that... Do remember this you hear?”

“Eh? No, um... I’m already filled to the brim with all sorts of stuff so could you cut me some slack?”

With a gloomy gaze, Io Kuzami threatened him in a deep voice, and Suimei shrunk back as he replied. He seriously didn’t want more troublesome things to happen.

“Suimei.”

“Yeah.”

In any case, setting her aside for the moment, Reiji and Suimei couldn't let their guards down, and corrected their posture to go on the attack. However, just at that moment, something swooped down on them. A shock suddenly ran through the ground, and a clout of dust vigorously rose up. It was just like a building had collapsed, and a grey smoke was sent flying. As they were engulfed in the approaching cloud of dust that had a vigour similar to a bomb blast, Suimei and Reiji immediately leaped away.

“Tch... Oi, what now?”

“Probably, something big, came down from above, I think...”

Reiji didn't seem entirely certain, but because of his enhanced dynamic vision, it seemed he did grasp what was the cause of the cloud of dust suddenly bursting out. Before long, the cloud of dust cleared away, and in between them and Hadorious, something enormous stood up.

“Oi oi oi...”

“This is...”

“Hou?”

Suimei, Reiji and Io Kuzami's voices came out in sync. And what suddenly appeared before their eyes, was something enormous in the shape of a man made of earth with a black gloss to it—a golem.

It's size was approximately five or six metres tall. It had no waist as was appropriate for a clay doll, but it had subtly made fingers, it was clad in mana and was floating like a rock satellite. It's joints were connected with mana, and the mana around it was dense enough that it could be easily seen as a red luminescence.

“Is this the duke's doing...? No...”

That conjecture seemed to be wrong. Looking at Hadorious, he also didn't seem to be able to grasp the situation, and for some reason he was frequently looking up at the top of the roof. Moreover, the details and subtleties of the

golem did not match up with those of this world. In that case, it was—

“As I thought, that’s how it is huh...”

All the conjectures Suimei had been holding on to changed into convictions. The reason Hadorious had been keeping Elliot contained was because he had a connection to them. As Suimei made a smile, he dusted himself off. And then, Reiji took his sword and leaped forward.

“A mere giant made of earth...!”

“Wait, oi wait, Reiji! Don’t be so rash!”

The reason he thought he had a chance at victory was like because he thought ‘it was only made of earth.’ It was an extremely simple thought. Certainly, if it was only made of earth, having been bestowed with the power of the goddess and wielding that shining orichalcos sword, it would be a simple matter to cut it down. However, that was only if it was a golem from this world.

Because Suimei’s voice of restraint was one beat too late, Reiji’s assault reached the giant. However, despite being a strike with all his might behind it, without any sound ringing in the air, Reiji’s body and sword didn’t even seem to feel any response from the strike.

“There’s no... Ku.”

As if trying to drive away a mosquito flying around it, the golem moved its arm in a dull manner. Reiji leaped to the side to evade it, and having missed its mark, the golem’s arm smashed into the ground.

Along with a shock that rang in their stomach’s like distant thunder, the ground shook. And as a cloud of dust rose up from the ground, dirt and pebbles flew into the air. Reiji then took decisive action without showing any fear. Aiming for the golem’s sluggish arm—judging that the joints would be his next target, he swung his sword, but—

“Th-this also won’t work!? What’s going on here!?”

As expected, the golem was unaffected by Reiji’s sword. And once more it swung it’s arm as if brushing away an irritating fly, but—as it was once more a sluggish movement, it did not hit Reiji.

A troublesome enemy had taken the podium. In any case, if their opponent was a doll, it would be common sense to take down the caster. However, there was no signs of the caster around them, and there was probably no point in striking down Hadorious. Moreover, even if they indirectly aimed for Hadorious, the golem would likely cover for him.

Judging that their first priority would be to knock down that golem who was a lot tougher than it appeared, Suimei began to move, and just as he did, Io Kuzami stepped in front of him. Fearlessly folding her arms, her red muffler gallantly flowed in the wind.

“It is about time that I must play an active—mu?”

As Io Kuzami gallantly stepped forward to support Reiji, for some reason she just suddenly crouched down on the spot.

“Oi, what’s wrong!?”

Her body was trembling. Something had happened. And judging that it would be bad for her to stop there, Suimei took action. And as he did, Io Kuzami suddenly stood up—

“... Huh? Eh?”

Letting out a sound that Mizuki would normally make, she looked around the area in bewilderment. And looking at her like that, Reiji continued dodging the golem and yelled out to her.

“Io Kuzami-san? What’s—”

“A-AAAAH!?!? Reiji-kun said the turbulent name!! I said that you can’t call me that even it’s a joke right!? RIGHT!?”

“Eh? Eh? Could it be, Mizuki!? Are you Mizuki!?”

“What do you mean could it be, of course it’s me! Actually where is this!? Weren’t we in a cave in the Alliance...?”

—Anou Mizuki, impossibly returned on this grand stage. Just what was going on with Io Kuzami? Reiji was bewildered, and on the other hand, Mizuki was also completely bewildered, and of course Suimei was also completely dumbfounded.

“Mizuki, what the hell kind of timing are you coming back with... Wait a sec, could this be revenge for what I said just now!? Your personality is too damn evil you mysterious spirit!”

Even as Suimei yelled, his voice naturally didn't reach Io Kuzami who had vanished. However, Mizuki did properly hear their bewilderment.

“Hey, what's up with you two all of a sudden!? What do you mean coming back!? Actually why the heck is Suimei-kun here!? On top of that with a suit... Ah, somehow that coat and black suit might be a little cool...”

As expected, the coat and black suit tickled her chuuni heart. As she looked at him with a warm and snug gaze, she casually turned her gaze over to the enormous object. The enormous object, was naturally, none other than the golem.

“Ho-hoeh...?”

And it rang out, a block headed voice. With her mind unable to keep up with the enormous existence in front of her eyes, she stiffened up for a moment, and then immediately became lively again.

“Eh? Th-this, this is, a golem? What's going on? Eh? What!? What is this!? Suimei-kun explain!?”

“We'll talk later! For now just shut up and be quiet! Also get out of the way and fall back!”

“E-even if you say fall back...”

“Ah dammit!”

Because of her sudden comeback, it seemed her circulation of blood had become poor. Seeing Mizuki move about in confusion slowly, Suimei let out an irritated voice, and using magic he gently picked her up and pulled her in his direction, and then carried her in his arm.

“Wa, Suimei-kun is quite powerful huh~”

“Shut your mouth. You'll bite your tongue.”

Saying that, Suimei easily jumped back a great distance—and began using magic as he did.

“Reiji, step aside!”

Giving out a warning to Reiji who was still moving around the golem, Suimei began the chant for his specialty magic.

“—Fiamma est lego. Vis Wizard. Hex agon Aestua Sursum. Impedimentum Mors.” (Assemble flames. Like the cry of the magician’s resentment. Give form to the agony of death and burst into flames, bestow the one who obstructs me with a dreadful destiny.)

And just as his chant finished, Reiji took a great leap backwards. Flame coloured magic circles appeared around the golem. And in the blink of an eye, the garden of the Hadorious mansion brightened up from the light born of mana like it was the middle of the day. And then...

—Fiamma! O Ashurbanipal! (Shine! Oh Ashurbanipal’s revolving stone!)

Immediately following Suimei’s keyword, the cursed flames rushed in on the golem. And on impact, flames bounced off of it as if a burner shooting magma was pointed at the golem. The golem was wrapped up in crimson in an instant, and due to its large build, the night sky was threatened by the red carnage—and after the flames vanished, the golem was in perfect health as if nothing happened. Even if Ashurbanipal’s flames was magic which specialized against living beings...

“Fuck! If it didn’t work at all then that thing’s the real deal!? Nobody ever said anything about that kind of thing coming out dammit—”

“Uwaah! Amazing! Amazing! Suimei-kun just used amazing magic! Suimei-kun, just when did you end up being able to do that!? Hey! Hey!! Teach me—”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH DAMMIT SHUT UUUUUUUUUUP! I’m super busy right now so seriously just keep quiet dammit!!”

“But, but, but, you know, you know!?”

“I don’t know! And no buts!!”

As Mizuki got in unnaturally high spirits while still in Suimei’s arm, he shouted full force at her, but naturally, she showed no signs of calming down. Conversely, as if saying she had no intention of doing so, she now made a

suggestive smile as she spoke once more.

“Fufufufufu... Suimei-kun! Reiji-kun! I will teach you about the weak point of the golem!!”

And the one to react to her saying that first, was Reiji.

“Mizuki, you know that thing’s weak point!?”

“Of course I do! A golem’s weak point is the most basic of basics in all magic knowledge you know?”

Tsk, tsk, tsk. Mizuki waved her finger left and right like a doctor’s assistant explaining something obvious.



“Are you listening? On the golem’s forehead, there is a talisman affixed with the word ‘EMETH’ which reveals the truth on it! If you take away the initial ‘E’

from that word, the meaning of the word changes from 'Truth' to 'Death', and the golem won't be able to maintain its existence! You can see its forehead right? It also has a talisman on it."

And Mizuki thrust out her finger with enough vigour that Suimei felt like it was accompanied by a cliché sound effect. There was certainly something affixed to the golem's forehead which looked like a note just as she said. And immediately following that, it seemed the Reiji also noticed it.

"I see... Then if we can skillfully cut that talisman..."

"Nope, it's useless. Look carefully."

"Eh?"

As Suimei denied her conjecture without putting on airs, Reiji raised his voice in bewilderment. On the other hand, Mizuki once more looked at the golem's forehead.

"It's useless you say, but, um...."

"Eh? It's different from what Mizuki said? The character is..."

"That's right. The descriptive word is 'אל-מת'. From the very beginning, that thing wasn't created by revealing the truth."

"Eh? Eh? But you know, a golem..."

"... How do I say it, but it seems you're making all sorts of misunderstandings. What you're talking about is 'EMETH' written in the English alphabet. Certainly even if you change the writing in Hebrew from 'אל-מת' to 'מת', it'll lose the power behind those words—but do you really think anyone in the world would use a golem using such a fossil of a method?"

The manufacturing of golems and the spells to move them was categorized as a secret art within magic. To freely make use of them, it required a high level of technique. On the other hand, it also had a side that was so well known that even Mizuki knew about it.

However, because of that, when magicians created golems, automatons and dolls, they put in place various schemes so that it was not simple to stop them by all possible means.

A standalone did not have the flexibility of its caster. Therefore, most of them could only take predetermined actions when given orders, and they were fairly unreliable against magicians. Because of that, it was popular to give them defences against all possible attacks. And so, this golem...

“S-so Suimei-kun! What’s written there!?”

“Just as I said before, it’s ‘אל-מת’... There’s a line in between that you don’t see in English which connects the words ‘God’ and ‘Dead’, so it likely means ‘God is Dead.’ It never was named after the truth, so even if you reduced the words up there to just ‘Dead’, it won’t do anything.”

For the time being, it seemed that what Suimei was saying was getting across to her. And because of the gap between his knowledge and what she knew about, she started to show her indignation in Suimei’s arm.

“Wait a sec, i-is that even a thing!? Unfair! That’s unfair!”

“Shut up! Don’t clamour at each and every thing! There ain’t such a thing as fair and unfair when it comes to magic!”

And then, Reiji spoke with a serious expression.

“Then Suimei. We can’t defeat that thing using what Mizuki said right? Then what should we...”

“Rather than that, i-it’s, coming right at us!”

As Suimei looked in the direction Mizuki was pointing, though the golem’s movements were slow, it was closing in on Suimei at a steady pace. Reiji once more charged in to lead it by the nose, but as expected, even when he hit it with his sword, there was no effect.

“Shit, taking out such a bothersome piece of crap... Rather, ‘God is Dead?’ What’s with that? Zarathustra? Nietzsche? Give me a break, does that mean it’s the ubermensch?”

As Suimei let his thoughts out like he was grumbling, he kept thinking while observing Reiji and the golem.

(Last time it was Ars Combinatoria, this time it’s a golem mimicking the ubermensch? Oi oi oi oi... What’s going on, none of this clicks together right?)

The caster who created the golem was likely the mirage man who appeared in the Alliance, but from the beginning, he had a guess that he was a ‘certain person’. However, if an ubermensch appeared, then there was a possibility that it was the work of a different person. But as he thought, as long as that man used Ars Combinatoria which was descended from Ars Magna Raimundi, only that one name should come up—

“No, I see. If it is influenced by Nietzsche, then the way of thinking would be near to the people of the future huh... That’s why, it’s incorporating that?”

While Suimei continued mumbling to himself, Mizuki had apprehensions about the situation getting any better, and called out to him.

“S-Suimei-kun Suimei-kun! What about, um, backing up Reiji-kun or something!?”

“No, even if I backed him up, nothing would get done—Oi Reiji! Get away from that thing for a bit!”

Suimei shouted out loudly at Reiji who was racking his brains on how to cope with the golem, and Reiji immediately broke away from it. Since the attacks from the glowing orichalcos sword wasn’t working, he must have also understood that there was no purpose in getting in any more attacks before doing so. Suimei also opened the distance between himself and the golem while still carrying Mizuki and took some shelter to hide his body. Before long, Reiji came jumping over to join them. Shrinking down their figures in the shelter, they had a secret talk.

“Duke Hadorious, what a thing for him to bring out...”

“No, the guy who did that wasn’t him. There’s probably a caster somewhere else, and he’s the one who did it.”

“Another? Which means...”

“Yeah, as we thought, that asshole is connected to the damn Universal Apostles. On top of that, the spell to create that thing is different from the one from this world.”

Just as Suimei said, there were golems in this world, but the golem currently moving about in the garden was completely different from those ones and was completely something from Suimei’s world. The existence of the talisman with

Hebrew writing on it was proof, and when the golem appeared, Suimei could sense a slight presence of mana that was different from the the mana held by the people of this world. It was likely that he was watching the fight between Reiji and Hadorious from nearby, and when he saw Hadorious fall into an inferior position, he sent out that golem.

“Suimei. Just as Mizuki yelled out, that’s a golem right?”

“That’s right.”

“Of course it is! I mean it completely looks like a golem! It can’t be anything but a golem!”

As the answer matched her expectations, Mizuki thrust out her chest with an ‘Ehhen!’ Suimei found her innocent attitude somewhat charming, but setting her aside for the moment—

“Yeah, that’s a genuine golem. The one that comes up in the Old Testament, the invincible giant brought into being by a rabbi.”

“Invincible?”

“Giant?”

As the two of them repeated his words like a question, Suimei nodded back to them. On the other hand, as he looked over to the golem, it didn’t appear to be making any movements. Because they weren’t in that place, it seemed to be taking a wait and see approach. The reason it wasn’t assertively attacking was likely because to them, it was just like Hadorious said, this was a bout—in other worlds, they were only testing their abilities. While Suimei was thinking of that, Mizuki questioned Reiji.

“Reiji-kun, how was it when you cut it with your sword?”

“A-aah. Even when I put all my strength into my sword there was no feedback. It also doesn’t feel like I’m hitting something hard...”

“I bet you didn’t.”

“Eh?”

“I said it just now, but that thing is invincible. If there was feedback—in other words a reaction, it would mean that there was an impact and a shock. If there was none of that, then in short, it means that one centimetre or even one

millimetre before you hit it, your strike is being suspended in the air.

“Th-then, Suimei!? Does that mean no matter what we do it won’t work!?”

“No, it’s not to that extent. But, if you keep attacking it like you have been, I bet none of your attacks will get through. If we want to do something, we have to cause its invincibility to sway, and make it able to get hit by our attacks.”

“Make it able to...”

“That’s just how special it is.”

Yes, this golem was special. If it was a normal golem, there was still room to spare when dealing with it. But, that was a golem which was close to the real thing, on top of that, if it was imitating the ubermensch, then it meant that a human would never be able to compare to it. ‘Man must fall for the sake of the ubermensch,’ was stipulated by Nietzsche. Therefore, humans had no choice but to fall before that golem.

Since Twilight Syndrome denied the existence of eternity, there was no immortality or eternity in the world. One day, anything and everything was definitely destined to meet ruin. Therefore, there was no such thing as perfect invincibility, but even so—

“It’s quite the nuisance that it’s close to invincible... Fundamentally, just as I said, everything we could do ends up getting nullified after all.”

Mizuki’s expression then clouded over with unease.

“Then how do we make that sway? Since all our attacks get nullified...”

“No, if we’re able to make it sway, we’ll be able to touch it. Precisely because it is an effect we give it, it can’t nullify it out.”

“I see... So it’s not like we don’t have any way of defeated it huh...”

As her concerns were taken away even just a little, Mizuki showed a relieved expression.

And then, Reiji once more pointed his gaze at Suimei. It was a reassuring, straightforward, refreshing and strong gaze that could bewitch anybody’s heart. And naturally, there was only one reason he made such a gaze.

“Suimei. We don’t know what we should be doing here. I want you to teach

us the way to defeat that thing.”

“Yeah, I got it.”

As Suimei returned a light smile telling him not to worry, Mizuki laughed with a broad grin.

“How do I put it, it’s Suimei-kun’s job to put up a strategy after all right.”

“That’s right. I kinda feels like the usual for us three or something.”

“... In other words, we just get involved in that much troublesome crap. Show a little restraint, I’m begging you...”

In response to their laughter, Suimei made an expression mixed with exasperation and fatigue. In any case, thinking about it was naturally Suimei’s role. Pulling himself together, he went on to explain the technique behind the golem. Taking a small twig in his hand, he twisted it around like a pointing rod while he spoke.

“—As long as the Hebrew descriptor on parchment is on the golem’s forehead, there’s no mistaking that golem is something from our world. And, the fact that it is moving without the name of truth, for the most part, means it is relying on ruach.”

“Ruach?”

“That’s, the Holy Spirit! It’s the Holy Spirit right!?”

Reiji didn’t know the word and repeated it, but on the other hand, it was vocabulary that Mizuki remembered hearing before and got somewhat excited as she pressed Suimei for an answer. However...

“No. That’s wrong. Mizuki, the Holy Spirit you’re talking about is ruach kadosh.”

“Eh? You’re kidding, I’m wrong?”

“The ruach I’m talking about certainly does come up in the Old Testament, but... Here it is referring to the original meaning of the Hebrew word, which refers to the many ruachs. The golem is modelled after a clay doll, but by breathing in the ruach carrying a rabbi’s wisdom into its nose, it is given the ability to breathe like a living being, and can move around like that.”

Ruach. It was something like the power of magicians. Strictly speaking, it was categorized as mana containing a spell or a charm, and used breath to give orders. There were also golems which used truth written on parchment to move, but when a standalone used the truth to move, it became a doll with poor intelligence that didn't know how to accept commands, so by blowing in ruach, it could be given the intelligence on level with a living being.

“Hey hey Suimei-kun Suimei-kun. This is super late, but...”

“What?”

“Why do you know that kind of thing?”

It really was a late question, and Suimei was unable to stop a sigh from coming out.

“... That'll have to wait.”

“Un. That will have to come later huh.”

“Y-you two, that's mean...”

As Suimei and Reiji bluntly turned down her request, Mizuki let out a groan with teary eyes. On the other hand, Reiji seemed to be thinking of a way of defeating the golem in his own way.

“To make a robot stop moving, you need to do something about its legs, or cut its motor... I think the theory is to do something about the energy source.”

“But as long as it is invincible, its legs won't crumble, and even if you directly attack the ruach, it'll get nullified. Of course you also can't just put something heavy on it or physical bind its body to seal its movements. By all means, the first thing that must be done is to make its existence inconsistent.”

“Wait wait Suimei-kun! It has a talisman there by nature, so what about doing something about that? How about it?”

“That also won't work.”

“Why?”

“It's simple. It's because, just like now, it's something that anybody would think of right away.”

“Hoeh?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that’s just how it is right? Doing something about the talisman, just as I said, it’s ‘an easy method that anybody could think of.’ Do you really think they won’t take counter measures against that? The first thing a magician would do is to make it so that it absolutely cannot be peeled off by any simple means, and obviously the defences would be thickest around there. Also... That’s right. Just like certain movies, it could be treated like a microwave oven, or an enemy’s body or something.”

“A booby trap you mean...”

“That’s how it is. The moment you put your hand on it, BANG...! It’s probably for that reason that it’s written as ‘אל-מת’ to intentionally make it easy to misjudge.”

Suimei took the twig he had been using and pressed it against his forehead and played out having it explode outwards. And then, having reached a pause in the conversation, Suimei immersed himself in thought.

“... Think Suimei. All the hints that can be gathered have been gathered. So it shouldn’t be that hard to defeat it. That target for attacks isn’t the golem. It isn’t the motor behind the golem’s movements either. It’s what gives it an existence, the idea which allows it to move. ‘God is Dead.’ Those are Nietzsche’s words, if that is the personification of the ubermensch who slights the existence of God, it means it is the avatar of the doctrine of ideology which advocates the rejection of God. There is no truth or good or evil in the world, only by living selfishly could the ubermensch be created. Living purely and properly in accordance with God’s teaching is absolutely not proper. Disperse those that would stop you. Trample over the poor and needy. Earnestly run forward for the sake of happiness. What is the counter to that ideology? An aged man who invites sleep? Or a child who pretends to be a badger? A monster who manipulates gravity? That’s wrong isn’t it? The one that opposes it in the most extremely simple way is—”

—Ressentiment.

Yes, ressentiment. It was something created by Christianity to affirm the

coexistence of the existence of God and the existence of the poor and the wealthy. As a theory which gave false happiness to the poor, it was a curse which gave a vested interest to the masses. Nietzsche called it ‘grinding one’s teeth due to powerlessness,’ the curse of society. And so, one would torment themselves over ‘inequality’ until the day they died, it was that deep resentment. That should have been the existence which threatened ‘Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche’ the most.

The answer came out. However, components from the other world were weak when used in this one. As long as the concept of resentment did not exist in this world, he wasn’t able to easily bring it out, and it wouldn’t be accompanied by much power. However, there was a magic that was most suitable to mimic it in this world. Yes, the pent of resentment and envy of the world which the fanatically corrupt used—

“Liliana... I’ll be borrowing your magic.”

In short, it was—dark magic. Misunderstood as an element by Liliana and the mages of this world, it was a magic which made use of a concentrated body of malice. Having told her not to use it as her mentor, yet going off and using it himself was somewhat bad, but this would be an exception. After muttering to himself, the others seemed somewhat doubtful at the ensuing silence, and Reiji called out to him.

“Suimei?”

“... I’ve got my thoughts in order. Reiji, I’ll prepare the spell to make the golem’s invincibility sway. You go ahead first, and ensure that you can give it a single clean strike. I want you to move around and disturb it—you got this?”

Using the twig as a pointing stick, Suimei thrust it towards Reiji with a snap. And Reiji nodded back to him.

“Un. If it’s just moving around I’m fine, it isn’t that hard to catch the golem’s timing within range of it after all.”

“Good. For the time being I’ll also be firing off magic to make them think we’re desperate. Well, it’ll probably become quite chaotic.”

“W-wait a sec! What kind of plan is that!? You’ll prepare a spell, so go ahead...”

Suimei-kun you haven't said anything about what he's supposed to do you know?"

"Isn't that enough? If the spell works, it won't be invincible anymore."

"Yeah. And if it doesn't work we'll just think of another way."

"That, may be true, but..."

While Mizuki clung on, Suimei opened his mouth as if he knew what she was thinking.

"You know Mizuki, what am I going to do by butting into Reiji's strategy? Do you want me to give this guy instructions on how to move and how to cut his opponent?"

"That may make it hard to move... I'm hoping you'll just let me move freely."

"... You're right, Reiji-kun and Suimei-kun are always kinda like that huh."

Mizuki remembered something from their little exchange, and in the end, she let out an astonished sigh as she became convinced. But it wasn't really something to be astonished about. Whenever something happened in the other world, they generally took on this kind of lax plan. In any case, having spent enough time on that, Suimei poked out of his shelter and peeked at Hadorious.

"Like I thought, seems the duke doesn't intend on moving."

"That guy said that he was testing me, so I don't think he has any intent of harming us. Since the golem arrived as a new measuring instrument, I bet he doesn't feel like moving until the golem is defeated."

After Reiji stated that, Suimei broke the twig he had in his hand.

"Alright, lets defeat it lickety split and slug him in the face. Plenty of times."

"OK. Let's go with that plan."

"That's how it is, strategy meeting over."

"Then I'll be going ahead. Suimei I'll be counting on you for that magic. If it doesn't work, you'll have to treat me to something later."

"Ou, leave it to me."

After Suimei replied, Reiji moved according to plan and closed in on the golem by leaping out of the shelter vigorously. While watching that, Suimei let out a

brightness spell towards the golem. He did it after their plan was decided, Reiji never turned around, and they never called to each other. That was because of the trust that had been built between the two up until now.

—If it's Suimei, even if he's cynical and shows restraint, once he makes a decision, he'll follow it through with all his might until the end. That's why, if it's him, he'll definitely provide the support that I desire.

—If it's Reiji, once he put his faith in someone he'll do so until the very end. Without bending, without yielding, in a perfectly straightforward way. That's why he won't look back. That's why he won't call out. He'll simply believe in me and push forward.

The trust they had in each other, that firm and solid binding of faith that tied them together, as expected, changed the situation for the better. The golem was led around by the nose by Reiji, and with Suimei's magic, its movements were dulled. Hadorious wasn't moving. The mirage man who should have been around, was also not moving. Was it because they thought they were fighting in desperation? As the golem's movements dulled, everything was tumbling forward in a good direction.

Since there was not a single ounce of doubt between Suimei and Reiji, the opening born of any hesitation never came forth. Each and every one of their actions were made as if it was calculated out beforehand as they moved towards a single goal. Naturally, there was no way of stopping them as long as that connection between them wasn't severed.

“... Golem. At first it was an artificial human created by a rabbi. It's an existence which faithfully obeys its creator's orders, the result of the endless desire of man, one of the ultimate arts of the Kabbalah. To fulfill that desire as much as possible, you're made to appear as perfection—no, to test our power and knowledge, you're manifested holding the thoughts of Nietzsche.”

With an unprompted remark, Suimei began explaining its existence. As if reinforcing his conviction in his conjecture, like he was strengthening the phenomenon to come.

“God is dead, those words from a dream. Until today, those words have been interpreted in every way, they affirm the free will of man, and deny their sins.

Its foundations lie in the restraint of one's swelling vested interests, and it is certainly one step in guiding humanity down a new path. And what brings that to the fore, is the 'theory which encourages the weak' advocated by Christianity, which makes the weak bear a grudge for the strong—yes, resentment.”

Yes, what Christianity continued to imprint on the masses was this. Taking the discontent of the weak due to the disparity of wealth, they used God to affirm it. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.' Just as those words implied, the strong go to hell, and the weak go to heaven. Using that to affirm the disparity in wealth, they affirmed that honourably poverty was righteous—in other words, the teaching of Christianity advocated that as absolute righteousness.

It sounded good when it was explained as something to encourage the weak, but that kind of thing was nothing but a means to contain any uprisings with regards to vested interests. It's fine to resent the rich. However, carry out your honourable poverty. And like that you will ascend to heaven after death, and sneer at those who fell into hell.

The poor would remain poor, and carry out their misfortune until death. Therefore, Nietzsche despaired at such a world. That was because he understood that as long as one was in this world, they would never accept themselves, and had to suffer until they died. That's why to break down that established sense of values, he said that God was dead. Honourable poverty would never bring the poor happiness. If those who had not been recognized didn't work hard so that they would be recognized, they would remain unrecognized forever. And like that, he denied the sense of values of Christianity created in the European world.

In that case, the existence of resentment would be the counter to his thoughts. Malice, envy, hatred and dark magic which was composed of those emotions, would be the counter magic to this golem. If dark magic's foundation was based on the emotions of the world, the envy of the weak towards the strong would definitely be there.

“—Come, come, follow me. Use my blasphemous voice as a guide down your path. Oh swirling and surging wills that all in the world find abhorrent...”

After quickly putting a defensive circle at Mizuki's feet, Suimei once more unleashed his mana to increase the effect of his magic, raising his rank temporarily. Drawing an inverse star with his hand shaped as a blade, the mana that had been filling his surroundings was devoured by the awakened malice, turning jet black darker than the darkness of night, and from that black curtain of despair, more darkness bubbled forth and was given birth.

... Dark bubbles. They were the clear and precise malice which bubbled out of the darkness. Embodied as bubbles, they were the mystical force behind dark magic. The moment those appeared, grudgeful voices surged up in the surroundings.

Those voices were... The shrill shrieks of a woman yelling out her bitterness. The hoarse voice of an old man taken by envy. The thick and vulgar voice of a man who eternally held a deep resentment. The irritable voice of an infant wailing.

Assault their ears, the torrent of voices pierced their brains, rang out, and changed the garden of the Hadorious mansion into a place of agonizing cries. And having that maelstrom suddenly fall down around him, Reiji yelled out in a pressing voice.

"S-Suimei! No matter how you put it this is a little intense!!"

"Suck it up! If I don't do this much there won't be any effect! You have that divine protection of that Goddess or whatever so you'll be fine!"

"Th-that's unreasonable! It won't be funny if you defeat your ally before defeating your enemy dammit!"

As one would expect, even Reiji had apprehensions about what Suimei was doing. And while listening to Reiji's complaints...

"—Oh darkness. Thou art the fleeting black which paints this world far and wide. Mix into magnificence, transform it all to sinisterness, and pluck all sprouts of fate. Eva, Zurdick, Rozeia, Deivikusd, Reianima..."

And so, the keyword that then came out of his mouth, was just like an elegy which extolled despair.

—Transient Hope (All Hope Results in Equal Despair).

What Suimei used to bring collapse to the golem's invincibility, was the dark magic that Liliana used. And by using rhetoric and adding nomina barbara on top of it, he strengthened it further.

The darkness bubbled out to the point where it filled the surroundings to capacity, but turning at abrupt angles, all the darkness rushed in on the golem. And just as Suimei planned, all the darkness pierced into the golem's body.

As if its footing had gotten unsteady, the golem abruptly shook violently as it staggered. And seeing this, Suimei yelled out to Reiji who was facing off with the golem.

"It swayed! Reiji!"

"Yeah!!"

Reiji gave a heroic and reliable reply, and then—

"HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

Reiji's piercing battle cry rang through the air. With his sword at the ready like he was about to shoot a rifle and his back lowered, he let out a great roar. It was as if he was firing out fighting spirit or accumulating mana.

His enormous war cry resounded in the area, and as it ended, Reiji used quiet movements to pierce to golem's body with his brilliant orichalcos sword.

"—Tsu!!"

A soundless voice, letting out his roar only in his heart, Reiji assaulted the golem who had lost its invincibility. After cutting off the extended arm which came to strike him in desperation with a single stroke, his sword immediately penetrated that enormous chest. Judging that he should aim at the golem's core, the shining orichalcos sword pierced through.

"OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!"

Once more, Reiji let fly his fighting spirit, as if to drive the sword deeper into the golem. At Reiji's attack that kept pushing in, the golem squirmed. Using its remaining arm, it tried to threaten Reiji, but Reiji poured his entire will into cutting down the golem, and didn't pay it any mind.

"S-Suimei-kun. Wh-what about backing him up...?"

“That won’t do. If I fired magic now it would be dangerous for Reiji. Besides, the only one who could finish that off is Reiji.”

“Only Reiji-kun...?”

“That’s right. The ones who deny Nietzsche are consequently the idols of God. In the end, Nietzsche focus was held captive by God after all. And since Reiji has divine protection, he is able to cut through that golem.”

Yes, Reiji had the divine protection of the Goddess Alshuna. By that divine protection, his powers were strengthened, and so if that divine protections mixed into his body and mana, it would become a counter to the golem. Even in this world, the fortune and misfortune of the people was decided by God. Therefore, if he was able to pour in the mana which mixed together with the Goddess’ power—

“Reiji! Drive it in! Drive it in and crash your mana into it!”

As if replying to that yell, Reiji focused on his accumulated mana, and used his sword as an intermediary to drive it into the golem. And then, the shining orichalcos sword snapped where it was stabbed into the golem.

“T-tsu!? My sword!!”

“Reiji!!”

In the middle of those sparks flying out like a bolt of lightning just struck, Suimei used magic to tear Reiji away. And the golem, once more stood up without collapsing.

“... Ku, it’s no good. Just one more push, we’re just one push...!”

“Making it so damn tenacious... Wait here a sec, I’ll make a sword.”

Pulling out the vial from his suit pocket once more, Suimei was just about to make the mercury katana once more when...

“No.”

“Reiji?”

Without reflecting on the danger, Reiji stepped forth. Just what was he trying to do? Did he find that one push needed to win? Or was it the foolhardiness of someone who had become desperate? And the answer to that question, came

out of Reiji's mouth.

“Give me power... My Sacrament, answer my desires once more!!”

As Reiji grasped the Sacrament and yelled out, his body was swallowed by the blue light let out by the Lapis Judaix.



—Victory was certainly within grasp.

The plan worked out by his friend was perfect. He certainly played out that hand which could knock down that earthen giant, all that was left was a single step to completely drive it into a corner.

However, Reiji was unable to finish defeating the earthen giant, and it was still moving. That was solely because he couldn't reach it. He didn't have the power to defeat it. All that was left was one step, and he stopped one step short.

That's why, he prayed. He prayed for the Sacrament to answer him. He desired it. Once more, just once more he wanted it to answer his voice.

—And in the next instant, what came swooping down on him, was a world that he had never seen before.

It wasn't the long, long tunnel filled with a mud like darkness that he saw before. Though he should have been standing in the garden of the Hadorious mansion, he was now standing in a field of wheat with a golden sun shining over him from the west, it was like a scene straight out of a western painting.

“Just where...”

As he looked around him, all he could see was a never ending field of wheat. Far in the distance he could see a mountain through a hazy fog. He couldn't even be sure if it had a base or not. Wind would sometimes blow in and gently brush the wheat, and just like a golden wave, it would do nothing but rustle in the wind.

And then he slowly began walking with no particular destination. He had no guide to show him the way, but as he proceeded through the wheat field, a white arbour eventually came into view deep within.

It was just like historic ruins that had fallen into decay. As he got closer to take a look, a pure white pillar had collapsed, and within a pure white canopy made of stone, there was a single table and some chairs left behind.

“Just what is this...?”

He spoke out in bewilderment as he stood stock still, he then touched one of the pillars, and a sensation like the pain from a weak electric current ran through him.

The pure white pillars looked to be made of stone, but contrary to his expectation they were not in fact stone. They were metal. The moment he touched one, he understood. And naturally what he understood, was that this was none other than the sensation he felt when he gripped the Sacrament.

“Then, all of this white...”

Everything that made up that harbour, was made of the same metal as the Sacrament’s blade. Bearing a resemblance to white porcelain, it was metal, and while he stared in wonder at the mysterious material, he looked up at the collapsed pillar—

“—Oh my, to think a visitor would come here. No, in this case I may be the visitor myself.”

From extremely nearby, he could hear the voice of a youthful man. And as he turned around to look at that voice, a Scandinavian looking man with a single scar running straight across his brow was slouching in a chair in the harbour.

Since when was he there? Upon arriving at this place, there shouldn’t have been anybody present. He seemed to appear all of a sudden, but it also felt like he was always sitting there, his arms and legs were all stretched out as he was completely relaxing.

The man with the scar had blonde, short hair. His eyes were blue. Here and there he had armour affixed to his white military uniform, and in one hand he had a white spear. His body also gave off an imposing atmosphere. Only his left ear tapered out like an elf’s ear, and split in three like a fork. And despite that, his right ear was that of a normal human.

“Ah—”

And then, Reiji suddenly realized. He abruptly understood. This man, was not human. He had the shape of a human, but he was an existence who was somehow different, and much larger. And that man seemed to find Reiji's bewilderment to be interesting, and gazed at him from several angles. As Reiji stood there perplexed at that gaze, the man seemed to have noticed something and made a surprised expression as he clapped his hands.

“Hohou? You're a human youngster huh. To think someone so straightforward like you would be chosen, it's seriously the end of the world. Well, the end of the world already started a long time ago though—”

The man with the scar must have thought that what he said was quite good, and began cackling with laughter. And in response...

“Um, who are you?”

“Me? I'm that thing's owner. If you've come here, then I should probably stick on the word 'former'—but that really doesn't matter. Well, in short, that's how it is.”

“That thing?”

“That thing that you're holding in your hand, right there.”

As Reiji looked down to where the man was pointing at with his finger, something was firmly gripped in Reiji's own hand. Unconsciously, he clenched his fist with all his strength. And that man's finger had been pointing at what was in his hand. Looking at the man nod, Reiji opened his hand, and in there was—

“The Sacrament...”

“That's right, it's the crystal sword, Ishar Cluster.”

It was the mystical weapon which saved him when he fought against Ilzarl and also when he fought against Grallajearus, the Sacrament. Suimei had told him that it was something tremendously dangerous, a weapon that he obtained in this world, and it was in its ornamental form. However, it was something that was stored away in the self governed state. If there was a former owner to it, then the man's words were hard to swallow.

“I heard, the former owner of this, died...”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“Th-that’s right you say... Then, if you’re here right now, just what are you?”

“I wonder. But, just as you said, there’s no mistaking I died. I properly remember the time I died, and its vestiges have remained right here.”

The man began tapping on his forehead with his finger as he let out a self deprecating laugh. Seeing his openhearted frankness, Reiji was a little perplexed, but in a complete change, the man then made a serious expression.

“Well, whether I’m dead or alive has nothing to do with you. More importantly, come in.”

“Y-yes...”

The man gestured Reiji towards a chair, and Reiji sat down awkwardly. Coming in contact with the metal, as expected, he received a light stimulus as a current ran through his body. And as if showing no restraint, the man plunked down into another chair across from him.

“But how do I put it. Back in my time this kind of thing didn’t happen, so it’s quite interesting. So even in this from I can experience all sorts of things huh. You may be witnessing something quite rare you know?”

The man let out a laugh with a know it all look, and Reiji then moved straight to the point.

“Um, where is this?”

“Here? I wonder... I don’t really know myself. It could be the dead centre of the Astral Line, or it could be the end of the sword brought out by the Sacrament, or it could be the twilight awaiting everyone at the very end. In the end, I never got to find out. However, it’s certain that it’s a place that those who are chosen by the source arrive at. You and I are both here. That’s all it means.”

“The source...?”

If he remembered correctly, Suimei had also said something like that when he talked about the Sacrament. It was the place that all consumed energy in the world arrived, the key to saving the world from heat death.

“... What. Could you be a commoner? Kaa! What’s with that!? A brat who isn’t even grown up like you who knows nothing at all got hold of that and was chosen? Aaaaah, it’s seriously the end of the world.”

“Um...”

“Take a look over there.”

Reiji couldn’t understand what the man was talking about and sat there perplexed, and suddenly the man let out a grand sigh, and pointed his finger out. And beyond that finger, as if it was a gravestone, a black monolith stood in place.

“Is that... A gravestone?”

“Don’t call it a gravestone. Call it an inscription, an inscription. There should be names written down on it of guys who are still alive.”

Standing up from his chair, Reiji went to take a closer look, and there was certainly the word Lapis written in blue letters. Aside from that, there were words written using the alphabets from many countries, and there were two types written down, those that were glowing, and those that weren’t. Reiji’s gaze was then captivated by a blue glow.

“... This, is my name.”

On that black monolith, the words Shana Reiji were certainly written in blue, and shining.

“That’s what you guys would call an announcement of acceptance, and a contract is now in place.”

“Announcement of acceptance? Contract?”

“That’s right. With this, when you go and die you’ll happily be going over there and get swallowed by the whirlpool of blue light. That, or you’ll be sent to the well of twilight with those guys—”

Reiji couldn’t really understand what he was being told. He could intuitively tell that it was something extremely important, but putting that into words, or finding out its meaning from here on, wasn’t something he could currently do.

“Hey, this’ll be something completely unrelated, but is the Zelvana Kingdom

still around?”

It was a name that Reiji remembered hearing before.

“Yes. If I remember right, they’re still in the middle of a war.”

“So it’s still around. Then, it’ll probably be fine. As long as the knights are still around, it’ll somehow work out.”

Saying that, the man once more began cackling. And then...

“So. Just what did you come here for—no, that’s a stupid question. All guys who come here, come here because they want the power to rebel huh. So you came here looking for power too.”

He was right on the mark. Reiji prayed to the Sacrament so that he could throw down the one standing before him, and ended up in this place. That was exactly it. And if it was, the man before his eyes right now was none other than the answer to that prayer. Therefore, Reiji asked him...

“Um, I’d like you to teach me how to use his. I can’t use this freely...”

“Using it freely, there’s too many ways of interpreting that. Do you want to master it? Do you want techniques from it? Or maybe you simply want the characteristic spell behind Ishar Cluster’s sword? I don’t know what you’re looking for.”

“... I see...”

The man likely meant to say that it was too abstract. At those blunt words, Reiji unintentionally dropped his shoulders. And then, the man made a somewhat exasperated expression as he spoke once more.

“Oi oi, don’t make that kind of face. You’re also a swordsman who reached all the way here right? You came here with a single emotion right? Besides, it’s not like you reached a dead end in getting stronger right?”

“To surpass the menace before my eyes, I want power no matter what. It doesn’t matter what it is, I need the power to fight.”

And as Reiji spoke his true intentions without a hint of a lie, the man let out a grand sigh while touching his own ear.

“... No helping it huh. It’ll be rough for you to go back empty handed too—I

got it. How 'bout I give you a single technique to take back?"

"A technique?"

"That's right. But... Fumu. The Circle Sept might be too early for you though."

"H-haa..."

"Well, A Strike should be suitable enough."

"A Strike?"

"That's right. It's a technique which uses the residue of the Sacrament's ability you see."

"R-residue you say..."

Residue. Hearing a word that didn't give off a good impression, Reiji's feelings on the matter unintentionally showed on his face. And then, the man put on a bold smile.

"Well, even if it's residue, it'll be an outrageous technique for you as you are now. Here, lend me that for a sec."

The man stuck out his hand, and Reiji handed over the Sacrament he was asking for. Immediately following that, a dazzling blue light overflowed, and that light took the shape of a sword, and before long, the Ishar Cluster transformed.

"Look carefully now."

Saying that, the man took on a posture that didn't look like a stance at all. He had a casual posture, yet somehow it felt like he was a sharp unseen blade. And then suddenly, with a bold smile, the blue gem inside the Ishar Cluster, the Lapis Judaix unleashed a blue light, and the two white porcelain rings around it quietly began moving.

Just as Reiji thought that the wind with no destination in the surrounding began gathering, a sound like thin ice was cracking rang out in the air, and in an instant many, many pillars of crystal rose to the air.

What came out was enormous pillars made of blue crystal. The man aimed for the centre of them, and stabbed his sword out. And then, accompanied by a pale lightning, crystals gathered at the tip of the blade, and formed an

enormous crystallization with the sword at its centre.

With a thunderous roar that felt like it would shatter his ears along with the hands he was using to plug them, a shockwave spread in their surroundings. Shifting over his attention to the enormous blue pillars of crystal, they were now smashed up, and dancing around in the air like diamond dust.

“—Crystallized Las Shiara (Crystal Suppression Sword, Jail Breaking). It shuts in your enemies in crystal and violently smashes them to pieces. Well, it’s a simple technique that doesn’t require much figuring out.”

“That’s, the Ishar Cluster’s, A Strike.”

While staring dumbfounded at the scene he was shown, suddenly, a violent gust blew through the wheat field, and the scenery began to grow hazy. It was as if it was the portent to him awakening from a dream.

“—Whoops, looks like time’s up. You got what you wanted so it looks like our business is settled. To say goodbye right after finishing my duty, it’s rather irksome huh...”

“T-time’s!?”

Already, up? Even though that wasn’t all he wanted. While thinking that with a panicked voice, the man spoke up like he guessed what Reiji was thinking.

“Don’t be so anxious. It’s a simple matter. If your opponent is strong, you just have to smack him with something even stronger. That is obvious. Besides, your pal already set the table to put an end to that rampaging doll didn’t he? All that’s left is for you to let loose with all your might.”

“Why do you—”

“You don’t got to worry about that kinda thing right now. Well, the Sacrament is a sword that cuts all phenomena and matter. The only thing that sword cannot cut, is the so called bond between two people.”

Saying that, the man let out a delightful laugh. And in response, Reiji let out the anxieties that still lied in his heart.

“But, the opponent this time around isn’t something so simple.”

“Are you still anxious about the charm on that doll...? My goodness, think of it

carefully will you? It takes quite a bit of effort to put something that has become frayed back together right? Then all that means is you have to beat it up before they can put in that effort. Just like I did now, thrust forth the Sacrament, quarantine it in crystals and knock it down. With that, it'll end."

With that, the man implied that the conversation was over. Yet Reiji still had questions that he had yet to ask him.

"What was that Circle Sept you mentioned just now?"

"You'll find out eventually. If you don't have enough power, desire it. And then, lend an ear to your inner voice. As long as you've been chosen by the source, the source will definitely respond to your thoughts."

And with that, the man handed back the Ishar Cluster that was in his hand. And after he forced it into Reiji's hand, his figure gradually began to grow hazy. Waking up from a dream, the people of that dream would vanish, it was that sort of omen.

"P-please wait a minute! I still don't know how to turn this into a weapon!"

As the man let out a sigh with a 'So you don't even know that huh...' his body grew hazier, and he spoke out once more.

"I'll only say it once you hear? Listen carefully."

And then...

—My crystallized sword spirit which glimmers with the blue light of the Lapis. Crystal Sword, manifest in the parted world.

"When you want that sword, just say that."

"Manifest, in the parted world..."

"That's right. When you give that answer to your inner voice, that thing will become a weapon."

The man made a smile as he turned his back as if the preparations to return had finished. And then, he pointed out his finger as he looked over his shoulder like he had just remembered something.

"I'll give you one last warning alright? From here, you may end up getting involved in some outrageous battles."

“Outrageous battles? You mean against the Demon Lord and Evil God?”

“Unfortunately that’s not what I’m talking about. The Demon Lord, Evil God or things like that, well if you try hard enough you can defeat them, but what I’m talking about is something far more outrageous.”

“Something... Far more outrageous?”

Just what was more outrageous than the Demon Lord and Evil God? And as Reiji was bewildered at a loss of words...

“Well, you might. There’s a teensy inconsistency in cognition between you and me after all. Just maybe, the world I was in and the world you are in are different. If that isn’t the case, it’ll be quite serious.”

Saying that, the man waved his hand in the air as he started walking into the wheat field. And once more, Reiji called out hot on his heels.

“Um!”

“... You still got something else? It’s already the end of the line you know?”

As he looked back with a troubled expression, Reiji’s question was...

“Um, my name is Shana Reiji! Could you please tell me your name!?”

It was a question that should have come much earlier, but now it came at the last moment. As Reiji yelled that out with all his energy, the man stared back at him in wonder—and then burst in laughter.

“Ha, HAHAAHAHAHAHA!! Th-that’s right isn’t it!? That’s right! That’s certainly an important matter! —My name is Ryzeia Rubern. Well, I don’t mind if you forget it you know? It’s already a name that you have no business with anymore after all.”

“Thank you very much Ryzeia-san! I’ll never forget your name!”

“Knight Ryzeia. If you’re going to use my name, then I want it to be said like that.”

Knight Ryzeia, leaving those words behind, he once more began walking. And before long, his figure and the wheat field became hazy and were swallowed by a blue light.

“—Take care of my partner there. Do your best to put it to full use.”

And with those last words from Knight Ryzeia, Reiji’s consciousness was once more drowned out in a blue light.



And so, the blue overflowing light that came out along with Reiji’s shout, immediately calmed down. Just what had happened? The afterimage that was left in Suimei’s eyes finally vanished, and as he looked at Reiji’s figure, he was standing there exactly as he was before—

“—My crystallized sword spirit which glimmers with the blue light of the Lapis. Crystal Sword, manifest in the parted world.”

And suddenly, he let out a loud shout directed at something out there. And in that instant, blue light poured out of his clenched fist, and it converged into the shape of a single sword.

“O-oi oi, just when did you become able to manifest it as a weapon...”

“Reiji-kun! Could that be the legendary weapon we were talking about!? Uwaaah! It’s suuuper cool!!”

With a white porcelain blade and a blue gem—the sword adorned with the Lapis Judaix, the crystal sword Ishar Cluster. As it let out a cold blue mist and lightning into its surroundings, it was certainly within Reiji’s hand. And it was overflowing with a quiet, yet preposterous power.



“Reiji!”

“I’ll finish it off with this! Suimei fall back together with Mizuki!”

“Wait! We don’t know whether or not that thing can be finished by a Sacrament!”

“It’s alright! That’s why...”

“Just what are you basing that confidence on...”

Seeing Reiji act full of confidence, Suimei knit his brows as he groaned. Just where did that overflowing self confidence even come from? It was mysterious, but Reiji jumped towards the golem who had started to recover itself without hesitation. And then, Mizuki called out to Suimei.

“Suimei-kun, why is it possible that Reiji-kun might not be able to defeat it with that weapon? How do I say, it looks like something super amazing though.”

“The Sacrament is certainly something outrageous. But, that thing has a Lapis Judaix buried in it.”

“Lapis?”

“That blue gem around the hilt. That is connected to the source, and it can take a small amount of mana to pull out all the energy that had been consumed in the world up until now. In a sense, that is an infinite cycle, it can be considered an eternal recurrence.”

“Sou-rce, and en-ergy, and e-ter-nal...”

Since Suimei wasn’t showing any consideration when giving his explanation, it was filled with technical terms. Because of that, Mizuki wasn’t able to take it all in, and started repeating it out while punctuating the terms. As she made an expression like steam was coming out of her head and she had broken down, Suimei gave her a summary in exasperation.

“In short. The golem that Reiji is trying to finish off, uses the thoughts of Nietzsche. However, that weapon that he’s using to try and finish it off, has components in it which affirm Nietzsche’s thoughts.”

“In that case, is it something bad?”

“I don’t know. Just now I used the components which opposed Nietzsche’s thoughts to make the golem’s defences sway, but now there’s something there which holds the components which can reinforce those thoughts. If Reiji can

finish it off before the Lapis Judaix can reinforce its defences then there won't be a problem, but if its invincibility is restored before that and we have to do it again—”

“I-it'll be restored?”

“In the worst case, we'll lose our opportunity and won't have any more hands to play. We'll end up reinforcing its strong point with our own hands after all.”

In the middle of explaining things to Mizuki, Reiji hastened his advance, and began getting close to the golem straight from the front. Without making any motions to the side to throw it off, he seemed intent on slaying it right from the front. And then, as if responding to each step, the Sacrament began pouring out its power.

“Oioioioi... Like I thought that thing's super dangerous...”

“Uwa, uwawa! This...!”

A wind ran through the garden. It was a far too intense wind, and it was swarming in on Reiji's surroundings. Before long, the wind was clad in the blue light given off by the Lapis Judaix, and was fired off into his surroundings. Around Reiji and the golem, crystallized pillars shot up as if setting them up on some sort of altar or temple. It was like watching a video of ice columns forming from the cold air being played tens of times faster than normal.

Pale lightning suddenly started coming out of the tips of the enormous crystal pillars, and enshrined that location. As the golem with dull movements was encircled by the lightning, it's body was sealed, and its massive earthen body was imprisoned in crystal in an instant. It was like it was put down in ice. And that phenomenon before his eyes, had the transparency of crystal, yet shined like the blue, blue light of the Lapis Judaix.

Sealed in crystal and no longer able to move, Reiji suddenly pointed the sword at it, and the blue light began to swirl. Blue crystals started to appear on the sword's blade, and before long it became a gigantic crystal, and took the shape of a single sword. And then.

“—Crystallized Las Shiara!” (Crystal Suppressing Sword, Jail Break!)

The golem trapped in crystal had no way of evading it. By that inevitable and absolute strike from the crystal sword, the golem and crystal were all smashed

to pieces as pale lightning scattered into the surroundings.

“He did it!”

Witnessing the golem’s defeat, Mizuki raised her voice in joy. And as Suimei approached Reiji together with her, Reiji was staring at the falling crystals with a satisfied expression.

“For the time being, good work.”

“Un, but...”

“Aah, all we’ve defeated is that troublesome golem. I still haven’t slugged that guy huh. Besides, I’ve got a whole lot of things I need to ask.”

“... You’re right.”

After Suimei said that, for some reason, Reiji’s satisfied face became gloomy. Suimei wasn’t sure what was going through his mind. But setting that aside, as he looked over to Hadorious, he could see a grim expression on his face.

“To break that man’s technique... It is beyond my expectations.”

“Don’t be stupid. It’s wrong to say we broke through it. If it wasn’t, you wouldn’t set it up so that its weak point was the hero’s power right? From beginning to end it’s been nothing but a damn test...”

There was no way it’s weak point would just conveniently be the hero’s power—the divine protection of the Goddess. It was likely that they were simply testing how far that power had gone. As Suimei was letting out his irritation as if talking to himself, he straightened himself out where he was.

“Suimei?”

Setting Reiji’s bewildered voice aside, Suimei spoke out in a courteous tone.

“—I think that it is about time that you make an appearance. Or perhaps, do you mean to say that you do not yet acknowledge our abilities?”

As Suimei suddenly started talking in a courteous way, Reiji, Mizuki and even Hadorious became perplexed. And in response to those manners shown to a high ranking magician, the man that he was calling out to—the mirage man quietly replied.

“—My my, allow me to say that it was well done, disciple of Lord Nestahaim.

It is only proper that I give you my praise for finding the answer faster than I thought you would.”

With words of praise, appearing on top of the roof of the Hadorious mansion, was a man with wavy long light purple hair and a large build. As the man jumped down from the roof, he gently landed on the ground without the speed one would have from falling or any of the impact, and lined himself up next to Hadorious.

“Gottfried-dono...”

It seemed that Hadorious didn’t think that he would show himself as he stood there with a surprised expression pasted on his face. Seeing him like that, the mirage man—Gottfried, pointed a light purple gaze towards Suimei, and responded in a composed manner.

“If he conformed to the etiquette, then I must also show my figure. Lucas. There is no need for you to be timid.”

As Gottfried stepped forward, Hadorious answered him with a light bow. On the other hand, Suimei also put his right hand up the right side of his chest, took a step forward, and returned the light purple gaze with a red one. And then...

“My name is Yakagi Suimei. At the side of the great magician Von Nestahaim who is the progenitor of our magic, I am one among those who seek the transient truth. Though it is discourteous to ask the name of a master and pioneer of the ways of magic, I would like to inquire your name.”

And in response...

“My name is Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz... Though my body is one that is soaked in mysteries, I am but one who holds a name which has withered away.”

“... The philosopher, who used God.”

Just as he thought, his prediction was correct. Suimei grit his teeth as he found that out. He had guessed this ever since that time they confronted each other in the Alliance, but that name came out. He was far superior in rank than Suimei. A magician who could be classified as one of its forerunners, a magician who could rival the Ten who Fell to Greed. The mirage man, Gottfried made a calm and thin smile. And then...

“It is fine for you to step aside, disciple of Lord Nestahaim. As you are now, you cannot keep me company. If you wish to face me, take back your original power, or obtain a suitable one before you come.”

“You’re telling me to come despite knowing that?”

“Of course. That is also the path of I who was summoned here. If you wish to stand in my path, finish what it is that you must, then come back before me.”

After telling that to Suimei, he then turned his gaze over to Reiji—to the Sacrament in Reiji’s hand.

“Hero. That is Knight Ryzeia’s sword. Use it with care.”

“You know about this—No, do you know that man?”

“Because that man and I, were both summoned here.”

As Gottfried smiled in a somewhat nostalgic way, Reiji spoke once more.

“—Why are you people doing this kind of thing!? Do you think it is alright for this world to fall into the demons’ hands!?”

“I do not think that. But it is still too early to answer all your questions.”

“Too early?”

“If you answer, then it’ll become an obstacle?”

“That’s how it is.”

At Suimei’s question, Gottfried returned a nod.

“So, it’s not like you’re lending a hand to the demons right?”

“Naturally. We recognize the demons and the Evil God as something that must eventually be destroyed.”

“Is it fine for me to believe those words?”

“It is fine. However, if you would like to hear more, then...”

They should once more put all there strength into standing up here once more. And while they were having that exchange with Gottfried, Felmenia, Lefille as well as Titania, Liliana and Elliot who were in the mansion and even Hatsumi who had been confined all showed up.

“Tia!”

“Reiji-sama, is that the mastermind?”

As Titania came to Reiji’s side, she determined that Gottfried was the ringleader and squinted her eyes. Gottfried had a certain indescribable atmosphere to him, so she probably made that conclusion. Following that, she then turned her gaze to the man standing next to him.

“Your Royal Highness.”

As Hadorious quietly bent a knee, Titania glared over him.

“Duke Hadorious. Since you are lining up alongside that man, would it be correct in assuming that you are pointing your sword at my father?”

“I swore never to server two masters. My only lord will forever be his Majesty the King Almadious.”

In response to Hadorious’ serious voice, Titania kept completely silent for a moment while she guessed what was going on. And then, Gottfried called out to her while she was doing so.

“The princess of this country is it?”

“...”

While remaining quiet, Titania turned only her gaze towards him. Gottfried then continued to speak.

“It is just as Lucas said. His sword is only proudly raised for that King and nobody else. If I were to turn my blade to your father, Lucas would become my enemy without hesitation.”

Hearing him say that, Titania was indecisive at her odds and ends... Or perhaps after thinking about it, it would be correct to say that she was grudgingly accepting it.

“... Lets withdraw.”

“Withdraw you say...”

“There is nothing that we can do in this situation. Even if we judge Duke Hadorious, there is nothing to punish him for. Elliot-dono was here by his own

will after all.”

Reiji was slightly bewildered at Titania’s suggestion. And then, he turned his gaze over to Suimei.

“... Suimei, do you think that’s alright?”

“Honestly, I don’t know what we should do. I want to wallop that big shot noble, but now that we’re standing on ceremony, I’ll have to set that aside. This situation is too complicated.”

“Is that alright?”

“It ain’t a matter of winning or losing a fight. What is victory for us in the first place? As long as we already accomplished our objective, we won, anything after will just be excess meddling. If we carried our momentum from before it would be one thing, but—”

Their momentum had come to a stop, and the scene had completely calmed down once more. If they made their move like that, no excuse they made afterwards would work. As Suimei made a bitter expression, Gottfried suddenly look over to Reiji.

“Hero. I will give you, a single warning.”

“What is it?”

“If you do not want to lose yourself, then rebel against the will of the Goddess. There is no other path before you, than that.”

“... I’m fighting by my own will! There’s nothing more than that!”

As Hadorious had pointed out something similar to him earlier, Reiji unintentionally shouted back. On the other hand, Felmenia stood next to Suimei, and inquired about what they would do next.

“Suimei-dono.”

“Lets go. We really can’t do anything more. Everyone, lets go.”

As Suimei pointed his gaze to each of them, Hatsumi let out a sigh like she was dissatisfied.

“It’s ended in a completely unrefreshing way huh.”

“It can’t be helped in this kind of situation. We’ll have to defer slugging that

man in the face for another time.”

Lefille was also, as expected, dissatisfied. Just like Suimei, she thought that she was going to be able to give Hadorious a good beating, so it couldn't be helped. In any case, judging that nothing more could be done, Suimei and the others began to withdraw.

Gottfried stepped aside, and after calling out to Hadorious, the two of them entered the mansion. Seeing that they also withdrew, Reiji suddenly called out to Suimei.

“Suimei, he said Leibniz or something, but, could it be, that one?”

“That's right. A mathematician and a philosopher, to prove his own theory, he is the man who used God.”

Even if that name wasn't famous, it was one that many people knew. On the surface, he was a mathematician, philosopher, scientist and intellectual, but as physical laws had not matured much in that period, he simply had knowledge in each and every scholarly pursuit of that age, and even excelled in the mysteries.

In short, he was a scholar of the mysteries, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. The inheritor of *Ars Magna Raimundi*, none other than the man who advocated *Ars Combinatoria* to the world.

Epilogue: A Brief Parting

Heading to Kurant City, Suimei and the others managed to accomplish their goal of rescuing Elliot. And after confronting Hadorious and Gottfried, they determined that they had insufficient battle potential and evidence to do anything, and had no choice but to retreat. Along with the bitter atmosphere which was close to defeat in the air, they returned to the Imperial Capital.

Naturally, they were unable to clear up the helpless sensation that had been building up within them, and all of them had many things to think about without bringing up the topic at all. In any case, after arriving in the Imperial Capital, they were now gathered in the open space before Suimei's base. Of course, Elliot, Christa and having finished her post war responsibilities, Graziella, were all present as well.

"I truly need to thank you for what you have done this time."

With religious clothing wrapped around her body, Christa lowered her head before Suimei and Reiji. She was dispirited at having to stay behind while waiting for their return, but as Elliot came back safely, she must have been quite relieved and her complexion had improved a fair bit.

"This time we ended up causing you quite a bit of trouble. So I would also like to show you my gratitude. Thank you."

Elliot also offered his gratitude as he went around and shook the hands of everyone involved in this case. Eventually, it came down to Reiji's turn.

"In any event, it's good that Elliot is alright."

"I ended up owing you a debt. One day I'll properly pay it back in full, so do let me know if you need anything."

"Hahaha, last time I ended up in your debt, so there's no need to worry about it."

"That won't do. It would affect my honour if I stay quiet and refuse to pay back what I owe. Besides, the one who owes me for that one is not you—"

Elliot stopped speaking there, and turned a grudgeful gaze towards Suimei.

“Don’t I get a handshake?”

“What’s that? Did you want to shake hands with me?”

“Aah, I’ll pass. If I’m going to do that it’d be way better with a girl.”

“Heeh? Despite looking like you have no immunity to women you’re going to say that? Could it be that you’re forcing yourself?”

“Shut it! Sorry ’bout that!”

As Elliot slightly sneered, Suimei shrugged his shoulders and Elliot regained his composure. This time, he had completely brought along unnecessary troubles with him.

“But, to think that you would be the one to save me. It’s the biggest blunder of my life.”

“Yeah it is. With this, we’re even from Reiji’s case, you got it?”

“You really do have an unrefined way of speaking.”

“Shut it, unlike you I was raised normally.”

After saying that, Elliot and Suimei began throwing cynicism and complaints at each other. Elliot had more to say with his aloof attitude than Suimei did with his foul mouthed sharp tongue, but—judging that it would never end if they were left alone, Reiji went to stop them.

“Now now, both of you, leave your fight at that. Lets move on to the main event.”

“You’re right. I also have quite a bit of interest regarding that.”

“That is the reason we gathered here today after all.”

As Reiji tried to change the topic, Elliot and Suimei both went with him, and then headed to the corner of the open space. And as everyone walked over there in succession, they arrived at the place where Felmenia had constructed the pool before. Right now, instead of a water tank, there was a large magic circle spread out on the ground. Graziella had only heard about the result of Elliot’s confinement, but she squatted down in front of the magic circle, and gazed at it with deep interest.

“This is, the magic circle to return you to your world is it...?”

She must have investigated the formulas which it was composed of before. Graziella read deeply into the magic circle as she touched it. And naturally, the one to respond to her was Suimei.

“That’s how it is. Rather, don’t take advantage of the fact that I’m away to tamper with it or erase it on your own alright?”

“You’re the shrewd one who came up with this. You’ve already established a way to come and go right?”

“Well yeah.”

Yes, when Suimei completed the magic circle to return, he had already kept in mind the coordinates and such to make it so that he could come and go. If he depended on the weather beaten magic circle, if the primary key to him returning vanished, he would no longer be able to do so. Because he had to set up several measures in place, he was quite troubled.

“But, I never thought a pool would become the hint I needed huh.”

“We must thank Felmenia-jou for that.”

“That’s also true, but somehow it’s rather ironic.”

Felmenia was the one who summoned them to this world, and since she was also the one who tied the last thread for them to be able to return, Suimei didn’t know quite what to say about it. And then, having heard Lefille say that, Felmenia...

“Suimei-dono! Please praise me!”

While fluttering her tail and circling around Suimei like a puppy, he let out a sigh like he was fed up with it.

“... Hey, regarding that, I praised and thanked you quite a lot already right? Is it still not enough?”

“Fufufu, it’s fine to say it once every day you know? If it is only praise then it is free of charge. Rather you’ll yield a profit.”

Suimei didn’t quite know what he was making a profit of, but he was already sick of thanking and praising her after doing it more than ten times already.

“Yeah yeah. Thank you very much~, as one would expect of the White Flame

Felmenia-sama~.”

“Mu, that’s too halfhearted!”

As things didn’t go the way she wanted them to, Felmenia flailed both her arms about. After Suimei’s identity as a magician was revealed, it seems she no longer worried about her appearances in front of the others, and sometimes showed childish behaviour without any restraint.

“Well, anyhow—oi, Mizuki, will you fix your mood already?”

Setting aside Felmenia, Suimei called out to Mizuki. Just as he said, Mizuki was pouting at full throttle, and her cheeks had puffed out about as far as they could go.

“Hmph. Suimei-kun you dummy dummy duuuummy! You should just fail your magic and die!”

Anou Mizuki, was unable to clear away her resentment. As she yelled that out, Felmenia spoke in a somewhat bitter tone.

“Mizuki-dono, that would be somewhat problematic... We’re going along with him after all.”

“Then it’s fine for only Suimei-kun to fail. With pinpoint accuracy.”

As Mizuki insisted that Suimei go through something terrible, this time Lefille folded her arms and spoke in a troubled tone.

“No, if that happens we wouldn’t be able to return anymore...”

“Then only Suimei should go through something terrible! It doesn’t matter what it is!”

Suimei let out a grand sigh as she showed no signs of improving her mood. After the fight at the Hadorious mansion, the mysterious spirit up and vanished somewhere, and the usual Mizuki was back. So Suimei confessed about the fact that he was a magician, but—it turned out like this.

It was the most obvious consequence, on the day he told her, she naturally didn’t listen to anything he said on the carriage ride back. It was only a few hours ago that she even started talking back to him. The fact that he kept silent about being a magician... Or rather, she seemed to be angry about the fact that

he kept rejecting her chuunibyouto all this time. In a sense, because he was monopolizing occult information that she loved so much, her anger doubled up. That's why Suimei had been apologizing to her ever since that evening.

"That's why I said I'm sorry, forgive me already..."

"Shut it! Keep apologizing to me! Until you die! Forever!"

"No, that's a little..."

"Duummy, duuummy, duuuuummy! Hmph!"

After disparaging him like a child, Mizuki once more made a sullen mood. Setting her aside, Elliot spoke out to Suimei.

"So, are you going now?"

"Yeah. We'll go back promptly and do something about all those anxieties that have been piling up."

"... You're right, like school."

"... And our friends."

"... Un, and our families."

Anxieties. Hearing that word, the ones who reacted sensibly were obviously Reiji, Mizuki and Hatsumi. They were matters that they haven't been worry about... Or rather, that they tried not to think about until now. Just what had been going on on the other side? It was difficult for them to imagine. And while they were thinking of that, Lefille spoke up.

"Sorry. We said that we were all going, but I think I'll stay behind."

"So suddenly, what's, wrong?"

Liliana opened her eye like she was surprised, and Lefille showed her a determined expression.

"No, I just thought I would pick up the training that I had stopped doing."

"You're going to stay behind and train?"

"Yeah. As I thought, to settle my worries as I am right now, I don't think there are any shortcuts. As long as I am a swordswoman, I think it is something I can only find by swinging my sword."

Certainly, it was proper logic that a swordsman's anxieties could only be

resolved by swinging their sword. But, Suimei denied her thoughts anyways.

“—No, Lefi should absolutely come along with us.”

“Why is that?”

“Nothing much, I just thought Lefi should meet with the instructor.”

“Instructor?”

“With dad?”

After Lefille and Hatsumi chimed in, Suimei gave them a nod. The instructor that Suimei was talking about was Hatsumi’s father and the owner of the dojo that Suimei went to. He stood at the peak of the Hundred Swords of the Martial World, and was one of the Four Great Sages of the Arts, the Sword of Four. Kuchiba Kiyoshiro. If she met and talked with that man who achieved greatness as a swordsman, she definitely had something to gain from it.

“The instructor is one of the monsters from my father’s generation. Even if you just talk to him, I don’t think it’ll be a waste you know?”

“Certainly, I also think you have something to gain from doing so.”

Hatsumi who had a bout with her also agreed with Suimei, and it seemed to spark Lefille’s interest, and she spoke with a serious expression.

“Hatsumi-jou’s father is it? I had heard about him before from time to time, but... How strong is he?”

“... Even if you ask how strong... Right?”

“... Uun, you can’t really put it in words huh.”

Suimei and Hatsumi both averted their eyes. The Kuchiba School of the Phantom Sword of the Kurikara Dharani, Kuchiba Kiyoshiro. He was an uncommon swordsman who could perform the inhuman act of cutting a high rise vertically with a single swing of a katana. He already far surpassed the category of just being strong, so they really didn’t know what to say about him.

“That’s how it is. Lefi is coming too. It’s already decided.”

“I got it, I got it.”

Grabbing Lefille’s arm, Suimei pulled her over to the magic circle. And as he did, Felmenia hopped over with light steps as well and stood atop the magic

circle.

“I’m look forwards to seeing Suime-dono’s world.”

Following after her, Liliana and Hatsumi also walked over.

“I am also, looking forward, to it.”

“There are a ton of animals too. When we get there, should we go to a zoo?”

“A, zoo?”

“It’s a place where they raise all sorts of animals from all over the world.”

Hearing Hatsumi say that, Liliana’s eye snapped open and began shining. In the other world, there was a mountain of places one could think of that she would want to go to. Just like Hatsumi said, there was the zoo, pet shops, touching farms and cat cafes that she would definitely want to be taken to. And while they were getting excited about that, there was a single good for nothing that couldn’t read the atmosphere and poured water all over it.

“We’re not going there to play around. It’s fine to relax a little, but in the first place we’re not there to sight see but to—”

“Suimei, you’re, so thickheaded.”

“That’s right Suimei, that kind of remark is the worst you know? You really can’t read the atmosphere.”

“That’s no good, un. It’s definitely like Suimei to do so, but...”

“Suimei-dono. I’m sorry but I cannot defend that...”

“Dummy dummy, Suimei-kun’s a duuuuuuuummy.”

“Ugu...”

As the consecutive critical voices poured in on him, Mizuki joined in. And as those words were packing in on him, Reiji spoke up.

“It’s true. To be so completely serious isn’t like the usual Suimei.”

“Shut it. It’s so nice isn’t it that you awakened to a new power and have it so easy.”

Suimei never thought Reiji would pull out the Sacrament’s power at the eleventh hour and achieve an exceptional level up. On top of the goddess’

power, he now had the Sacrament. It was beyond the level of foul play. However, Reiji didn't seem to think that in his own little way, and his expression became slightly gloomy.

"... I don't particularly think I had it all that easy though."

"Even though you're now able to use that much outrageous power?"

"... Suimei is the one saying that? Even after rampaging like that?"

Reiji pointed a critical gaze at Suimei implying he was the same. Even so, the voice he used to talk back at Suimei like he always did had no energy behind it. In any case, deep within Reiji's eyes, Suimei realized that there was a light entrenched in there like he was brooding over something.

"... Hey Reiji, what's wrong? You've got no pep to you, you know?"

"No, there's just something I have on my mind."

"Something on your mind?"

And Suimei had an idea of what that something was.

"You worried about what you were told at that time? That's just a kind of common psychological attack you know? I don't think it's something you need to particularly worry about right?"

"That's probably true, but even so it's stuck in my mind."

He was caught on Gottfried's warning, 'If you don't want to lose yourself, rebel against the will of the Goddess.' That wasn't something that Suimei didn't understand either. The subjugation of the Demon Lord was just that sudden an event. Before he knew it, he could have been manipulated by a god, and toyed around with. If he thought of it that way, there was certainly things that Suimei would be worried about, and the person in question would have just that much more of a strong sense of discomfort regarding it.

"... As I thought, shouldn't you also go back for now? It's better for you to go back once, take in the air, and calm down. You're starting to choke down before you even realize it."

"That's true... But."

“It may seem strange coming from me. But rest is important isn’t it? Even I relaxed before heading to Kurant City, and it was quite beneficial. I was able to realize it because of Menia after all.”

“Saying it’s all thanks to me is a little... Eheheh.”

Felmenia started chuckling while making a slovenly smile. Setting her aside, Suimei continued what he was talking about.

“Come on over. Let’s go back for now OK?”

“Uun, even so I’ll stay behind. Besides, if we also vanish on top of Suimei’s group, if something happens here we may not be able to deal with it anymore.”

“But you know...”

“Sorry. Let me be selfish here.”

Reiji was being much more stubborn than Suimei expected. Was he just that worried about this world? That was probably also true, but Suimei also thought that it was still related to what Gottfried had said. And as long as Reiji was that determined, there was no point in trying to persuade him any further.

“... I see. I got it. If that’s what you decided, if I say anything more it would just be insensitive huh.”

“Un. Thank you.”

Saying that, Reiji honestly gave his thanks. Suimei then looked towards Mizuki who was still pouting.

“Mizuki, are you sure it’s fine? Not to go back?”

“I’ll also stay behind. Reiji-kun is staying after all. So me too.”

“Sorry.”

“It’s fine. Don’t worry about it.”

As Mizuki smiled towards Reiji, Suimei spoke once more.

“Everything is back to normal so I think it’s good timing to go back though.”

Suimei wasn’t sure what was wrong with his casual remark, but Mizuki’s face suddenly went pale. And as Suimei realized the meaning behind that, he averted his gaze from her as he felt unpleasant at having guessed what she was thinking about, and apologized.

“Don’t avert your eyes at that part! All your persuasive power vanished at once!”

And while that was going on, Reiji looked towards Suimei with a bitter smile.

“Hey, if it’s that, can’t Suimei reproduce it?”

“Wait, Reiji!? Don’t friggin’ dump that on me in this kind of situation!!”

“But you know, back in the Imperial military encampment you did it right? That FUHAHAHA or whatever laugh.”

And as expected, that was the limit. Mizuki’s eyes peeled back, and she collapsed right where she was as she began frothing from the mouth.

“Stop... Don’t dig it up... If you don’t stop, I’ll die. I’ll emotionally die, so...”

Seeing that, Suimei thought it would be bad if they didn’t change the subject.

“... Well, whatever. It’s about time I activate it.”

“Wait a sec Suimei! Are you running away!?”

“I’m not running or anything, I just said that I was going now right!? You guys do something about Mizuki!”

“Wait, you coward!”

As Reiji yelled at him, Suimei stuck out his tongue at him and urged Felmenia on.

“Menia, I’ll leave the assistance up to you. Let’s get going before it gets weird alright?”

“Y-yes. Leave it to me.”

Ignoring that it had already gotten weird, Suimei and Felmenia activated the magic circle. And then, Selphy, who also happened to be present, called out to Hatsumi.

“Hatsumi, have a safe trip.”

“Yeah. Once I finish what I need to do over there, I’ll come back, so until then give my regards to Gaius and Weitzer.”

In complete contrast to the earlier exchange, the two of them had a rather calm and gentle one. On the other hand, Reiji seemed to have given up seeing

that the magic circle had activated, and let out a sigh as he changed his mood and smiled towards Suimei.

“Take care. I’ll be imposing on you a bit, but I’ll leave things on that side to you.”

“Suimei-kun! I think you already know, but bring me back a souvenir! The amount of apologies that you owe me will be determined by that!”

“Yeah yeah, I got it.”

The ones who were departing atop the magic circle and the ones seeing them off all waved to each other. And before long, Suimei and the others were swallowed by a blue beam of light, and were transferred from this other world to the modern world of Earth.