

THE MAN PICKED UP BY THE GODS

– Kamitachi ni Hirowareta Otoko –

- Volume 5 -

AUTHOR:

Roy

[Translated by: Neo Translations]

CHAPTER 1

THE START OF TRAINING

The Next Day

Maybe it's because the tournament just ended, but I'm feeling a bit slow today. I need to ready myself before Elia's group arrives, so I quickly made breakfast, and ate.

While I was eating my breakfast, a slime suddenly appeared in the room, teleporting over the table. It was a space slime, a slime that could use dimension magic. It spit out an envelope on the table, then it left just as quickly as it appeared.

Thank you for delivering it.

"It's about yesterday's incident..." [Ryouma]

After taking a look at the summary on the envelope, I found out that it was regarding my request to gather information about Matthew and the Tamer Guild. I broke the seal and read its contents. From that I found out that things have developed far more than I could imagine. My eyes glued themselves to the letter as I continued to eat.

...on the post script, it read, "The slime researchers are doing fine." I didn't really ask for this extra tidbit, but I'm grateful nonetheless.

While I was reading the letter, the gong – which I use as a replacement for a door bell – rang, indicating that Elia and the others were here.

"Already!?" [Ryouma]

Panicked, I gulped down the remaining bread and bacon egg with a glass of water, then I teleported outside, and invited Elia and the others inside. The girls were dressed

lightly, just like on the day of our duel.

“Sorry for making you wait.” [Ryouma]

When I greeted them, the girls quickly realized that I wasn’t the same as usual.

“Ryouma-san, is something the matter?” [Elia]

“I’m fine, I’m fine. I just forgot the time because of a letter I was reading.” [Ryouma]

“Letter? Could it be about the tamer guild?” [Riera]

“Eh, how did you know?” [Ryouma]

Riera glanced at the others before speaking.

“Well, we saw you writing the letter yesterday, right? And besides, an incident like that would naturally cause a commotion.” [Riera]

“Ahh, well that’s true...” [Ryouma]

If the contents of the letter are true, then it’s not really strange for them to know. In any case, I should invite them inside, then I’ll ask them what’s going on in the town.

The contents of the letter could be split to two main parts. One, was in regards to the guards’ movement after arresting Matthew, and the other was in regards to Matthew’s punishment.

Apparently, after the guards arrested Matthew, they forcefully investigated the tamer guild. There were already a lot of problem regarding the tamer guild. One matter was obviously its unnecessarily rowdy members, and then there’s the issue of the aide who suddenly went missing. So when Matthew was caught, the guards used that as a pretext to investigate the entire guild.

As a result, they found out that Matthew was involved in a whole slew of other crimes, and that the shady aide was apparently connected with the dark guild. At that, the

guards arrested the two people who, despite paper saying otherwise, were the current leaders of the guild.

Details surrounding the charges were not publicized, but the part about the guild working with the dark guild to make money off illegal goods was.

The illegal goods were confiscated from the members. As for the members who didn't acquire said goods on their own volition, they were made to explain what happened and return the item to prove their innocence. Originally, these goods should've been handed over to the guards alongside a written report. But what happened instead was that Matthew and his cronies hid the goods, and then they gave them to the dark guild to make a profit.

Incidentally, the magic tool that Matthew used in the tournament was apparently something that he obtained after threatening a conjurer from outside to hand it over to the guild and pay up.

If it was someone from Gimuru, things might've gone differently, but with the conjurer being an outsider, he was afraid of Matthew's title as a tamer guild branch guildmaster, so he just quickly left as soon as he handed over the magic tool along with the money.

Going back to the topic.

With all these added up, the odds Matthew would be given the death penalty was high. Having realized that he could no longer escape, he decided to confess and cooperate with the authorities to crack down on the criminals, and reduce his sentence. (Mainly in regards to his bosses and the people he knew to be doing something similar.) Even though Matthew was so brazenly refusing to give up this late in the game, I actually surprisingly found myself admiring him...

But with how big everything has become, with Matthew's scandal and the tamer guild's, it's likely his request will simply be drowned out. Not to mention, even if he does get his sentence reduced, he'll still be getting a life sentence. In the near future, he'll be thrown into the capital gaols, never to see the light of day again.

With the winds blowing against the tamer guild growing fiercer than ever, the troubling ones have already ran away. It seems there're also some people amongst the participants of the tournament who are involved. Finally, the letter ended with these words, "More and more of these sort of people will probably appear from now on."

The source of this information was none other than Crais-san who entered the guards, so its definitely reliable. Of course, he didn't tell me everything, but that's only expected.

Save for the informer being Crais-san – to protect him – I divulged the contents to Elia and the others. When I did, they all simultaneously took a deep breath.

"Ojousama, may I borrow a rimel bird? While I do believe that the guards must've already sent a messenger, I'd still like to send a report to the duke just to be safe."
[Sebasu]

"I understand, I'll prepare it now." [Elia]

As Elia began her preparations, Sebasu-san took out a small golden envelope along with a set of writing tools, then he started writing his report.

Putting those two aside, I asked the remaining four girls.

"By the way, what happened to the town? You mentioned there's been a commotion..."
[Ryouma]

"There's a group that's transporting a lot of magical beasts from the second town, right?" [Miyabi]

"The road's congested thanks to them, and the guards by the north gate even had to help." [Michelle]

"Rumors of the tamer guild have also become the talk of the town, so you can hear people talking about it everywhere." [Kanan]

"Even now some of the guards are still interrogating the people of the tamer guild."
[Riera]

It'll probably take a while before things can calm down... As for me, people know me, so I think I'll be fine, but... Well, whatever happens, happens.

Besides, it's not my fault, and there's nothing I can do about what's already done. As I was thinking that, Sebasu-san and Elia finished sending the letter. Now then, I should start the training.

We started off with some light running. This was nothing new for the girls, they did this sort of exercise regularly too. The goal here is just to warm up the body. After that, I split the girls into two groups. Kanan and Riera for swordsmanship, while Elia, Miyabi, and Michelle, for magic training.

First, I took the sword team and Sebasu-san to the bamboo thickets in front of the house. There, I took out the heal slime, the big space slime, a mimic slime that's mimicked my image, and three iron slimes, totaling to six slimes all in all.

“Alright, let's start the training. First, take these.” [Ryouma]

I handed an iron slime that's transformed into the shape of a sword to Riera, and another two of those to Kanan.

“The first part of your training is ‘Bamboo Cutting.’” As the name implies, the both of you will be cutting the bamboos here. It might seem simple, but cutting one cleanly isn't easy. And also—” [Ryouma]

With a flick of ‘Exchange’, I took out my katana, and slashed it at a nearby bamboo diagonally up to the right. The bamboo was immediately cut, but with its support gone, the upper part of the bamboo inclined, falling toward me. Twisting my body to the left, I dodged. Then as I took a half step back, I cut the falling bamboo's tip to smoothen it. Without breaking my momentum, I followed up with another swing, and I lopped off the other end of the now standing bamboo.

Leaving the edges sharp is dangerous, so it's best to cut them off.

“Well, as you can see, sometimes bamboos would fall like that. And they can be likened to an attack you’d need to defend or dodge.

There’s a heal slime on standby so you don’t have to worry about wounds. Also, the iron slime swords can recover themselves, so there’s no need to worry about the swords wearing out, and you can dedicate all of your focus to cutting bamboos.

Oh, and the mimic slime and the big space slime are just here to gather the cut bamboo. You don’t have to worry about them.” [Ryouma]

I’m having the slimes gather bamboo, so I can make some charcoal later. But I also gave them instructions to defend the girls in case a magical beast comes out.

“I don’t think you’ll be able to cut them at first, but I’m sure you’ll eventually be able to as you get used to it and get stronger.” [Ryouma]

The two girls were full of resolve as they nodded. Then they distanced themselves from each other a bit, and then they started cutting at the bamboos. Kanan’s attack only managed to peel the bamboo, but Riera’s was at least able to dig halfway in.

Anyways, this training area is right in front of the house, so I can still see them from a distance.

“Sorry for the wait.” [Ryouma]

“Ryouma-han, will Kanan and Riera be fine?” [Miyabi]

“They’ll be continuing that for a while. Let’s start your training while they’re doing that... Ah, but before we start, I’ll have to explain something real quick.” [Ryouma]

The main goals of the magic team’s training is to improve their ability to sense magic and their ability to manipulate it. In order to achieve that, I’ll be teaching them a new magic and a personally created magic of mine.

After that, I asked them their respective specialized attributes and the magic they wished to learn. Elia’s specialties were fire and ice. She could use neutral magic

although she doesn't specialize on it. Her issue is on control.

Miyabi's are fire and poison. She doesn't have anything she's particularly bad at, but she also doesn't have anything she's good at. That's a problem in and of itself.

Michelle's mostly earth and poison. But because she has All Attribute Affinity, she also wishes to study other attributes. Since that's the case, we'll work on fire today. I also have a magic we can use for training that'll also be useful in day to day life.

Having made my mind, I had the three girls wait for a bit while I took out three slimes and a large barrel from inside the mine. I filled the barrel with water. And then using earth magic, I created 3 containers about the size of a small pot, and distributed them to the three girls.

"What's this for?" [Michelle]

As Michelle asked with eyes overflowing with curiosity, I explained their training.

"What I'll be teaching to you three today is the fire magic, 'Heat', a magic for the purpose of heating things. You will be using this to boil water. And these three slimes will judge the temperature of your water." [Ryouma]

I took each of the three slimes and placed them before the containers. These small slimes are known as the hotty slime. They're flame slimes – slimes that can use fire magic – that evolved after being submerged in water for an extended period. Now, they can use both fire and water magic.

Hotty slimes generally prefer water about the temperature of a hot bath. Most of time, they could be seen floating on water they've heated to a level they like. Or if not, then that's probably because they've assimilated with the water and can't be seen. They look similar to normal slimes, but they're smaller and are a bit more watery.

During winter, I can put them inside the futons to warm them up. But back when they'd

just evolved, they kept spurting hot water while I was sleeping, so the futon would be super wet by the time I woke up, making it really cold.. If it weren't for my resistance to cold I would've probably shriveled up and died.

But that's not really relevant right now...

“This ‘Heat’ is relatively easy to use. Just imagine your fire attribute magic power mixing with water, heating it up, as your magic power flows into the wand” [Ryouma]

The fire-attribute magic power is concerned with heat and not with fire, so there's relatively more fire-attribute in the magic power in the air during summer time or in hot places. In the same vein, the reason why the temperature of water can go up is because fire-attribute magic power is actually being added to it. But if you put too much magic power in, the temperature will be too hot, and if too little, then the water will remain cool.

“Which is why you'll need to control the amount of magic power you release in order to keep the temperature within the hotty slimes' preference. In this way, you'll get used to controlling your magic power.” [Ryouma]

After finishing the explanations, I drew water from the barrel, and filled up the containers. With the hotty slimes beside the containers, the preparations were complete. Once the temperature meets the requirements of the hotty slimes, they'll enter the container themselves.

For a container this small, it won't even take the magic power required to cast a single elementary spell. The three girls were shocked when they heard that, but magic power being efficient heaters was never a joke. After I demonstrated how to do it, Elia and the others began their training.

“Not enough?” [Miyabi]

“It's hard to hold back...” [Michelle]

“Ah... I put too much in again...” [Elia]

The three girls quickly learned how to cast 'Heat', but the control after that was difficult. The hotty slimes are hard to please, so no one's succeeded yet, but the one doing the best was currently Michelle, then Miyabi, and then at the last, was Elia.

Elia even boiled the water once out of the five times she tried. The magic power required is just too small, so she's having a hard time... And then there's also the fact that the container's about as big as a stockpot, so she really has to manage the amount of magic power put in. As various aspects of their abilities were being challenged, the training continued.

CHAPTER 2

THE END OF TRAINING'S FIRST DAY

After I gave instructions to the two teams, I quietly watched over their training. Then one hour later...

It was time to move on to the next training.

On the sword team, Riera managed to cut 33 bamboos, while Kanan cut 18 bamboos. The edges were tattered because of the number of attempts they needed to cut it, but with this many bamboos cut, it's more than good enough for their first time.

They're not used to this kind of training, so they're visibly exhausted with their bodies drenched in sweat and their breath ragged. I gave them five minutes to rest, before we moved on to the next part of their training where I had them alternately spar with the mimic slime.

As for why sparring, well... I use a katana for my weapon, so there's not much I can teach them anyway. And besides, I think what they really need right now is experience. So I figure I would just let them fight again and again to let them accumulate that experience. They could also learn while doing that. For that I asked Sebasu-san to be their advisor. Of course, I also encouraged them to exchange opinions as they take turns sparring.

As soon as the break ended, they immediately started sparring. I watched their battles for a little while.

The mimic slime is strong enough to be their partner, and the heal slimes are also there. I also forbade the use of magic and placed some limitations on the mimic slime to be safe, so everything should go well. It's still too dangerous for the mimic slime to spar with them in the same way it does with me.

After that, I went to the magic team. They need to preserve their magic power for afternoon's training, so the training this time won't use their magic power.

"The next training will train your ability to sense magic." [Ryouma]

I prepared some wooden cups alongside roundly cut magic jewels. What they need to do is simple. They just need to find where the magic jewels in the cup are hidden. The three girls were able to do this easily, so I decided to raise the difficulty.

I took out five cards over which several figures were drawn, and another five cards over which were nothing but blank white space. Magic jewels were mixed within the ink that was used to draw on these cards, so magic power can be faintly sensed from it. Sensing whether something is drawn over the card or not through that faint presence of magic power is their training. They'll be doing this until they are able to perfectly distinguish which is which.

This training might seem simple, but it's undoubtedly effective. The girls couldn't perfectly sense the faint magic power in the cards, so they'll have to continue this training for some time.

"Next... how about this card?" [Ryouma]

"..." [Elia, Michelle, Miyabi]

...As the girls wordlessly focused, the training quietly continued.

After helping them train for some time, I told them to take places, asking and guessing which card, then I left to prepare lunch.

"Hmm... what'll be today's menu? ...Ah, I know!" [Ryouma]

When I entered the kitchen in the tunnels, what caught my attention was the pot of that chili-like ingredient. Maybe it's because of Elia's Dandan Noodles Pasta(?), but I suddenly thought of a dish I could use it in.

“Let’s see... corn flour, minced meet, onions, garlic, cheese, salt and pepper, and other various stuff...” [Ryouma]

First, I added water to corn flour and kneaded it into the size of my palm. Then I fried it in the frying pan until it was fried yellow, where I turned it over, and then continued frying it. This is a dish I’ve made several times back in my previous life. It’s the mexican dish, tortilla. A bread made from lightly frying corn flour.

It’s been a while, so why don’t I take a bite off the edge.

“...It smells and tastes great, but it’s a bit hard, no? It’s only faintly hard though... I could still bring this out saying it’s a test product, I mean – after all – it is softer than preserved food. Or if it’s really no good, then I could make that slightly thinner crunchy thing... what was it called again? Nachos? Anyway, I could also do that.” [Ryouma]

It needs to be deep fried, right? While I was thinking of irrelevant things, I stir fried the minced meat in finely-cut garlic with salt and pepper for seasoning. I also cut some flowery vegetables normally used for salads.

Next, I turned the remaining pasta and garlic into paste. Then while tasting, I added herb, tomato, that chili-like ingredient, and mixed them together to create the salsa. I squeezed in a tiny wincy bit of lemon-like fruit juice for the aroma. The sourness of the tomato should cancel out the odd sourness in the chili-like ingredient...

“Something like this, I guess.” [Ryouma]

As I made it according to my memory, I managed to create something akin to a Mexico dish’s sauce. Then I folded the tortillas I was making a while ago, and stuffed the vegetables and the fried minced meat inside it. After I topped it with salsa and grated cheese, the special taco was completed! After a quick taste test, there’s still room for improvements, but it’s definitely a delicious taco.

I should make at least two for everyone in case they want more, so I made 15 all in all,

then I put it all over a big plate, and brought it over to where Elia and the others were.

On the way, I dropped by the medicine room, where I took out a pill from the cabinets, threw it into my mouth, and as a bitter and yet fresh aroma filled my mouth, I crunched and swallowed the pill.

“...It’s bitter alright...” [Ryouma]

This pill is a herb pill. It’s made out of the mixture of the fragrance extracted from several mint-like herbs, and mixed in candy made out of one variety of this world’s sugar known as “Mumito”. It’s a breath freshener of sort, but it can also be treated as a kind of medicine. Either way, it’s great to have after eating garlic dishes.

Every time I see this, I can’t help but think of how strange “Mumito” is... Just as its name implies(?), it really is a sugar with no taste. It’s a sugar used throughout the world to help bread and wine ferment. But aside from its taste, everything else is exactly like sugar... Its color, the reaction it makes when exposed to fire, and even its caloric content. Its taste being the only thing different is a mystery, but I guess it can’t be helped.

“‘Tasty with no calorie’ is a catchphrase I’ve heard before, but in mumito’s case, it’s ‘Calorie with no taste’...” [Ryouma]

Mumito can be produced in large quantities, making it cheap, so it’s really unfortunate that it’s not sweet.

“Oh, I almost forgot the time. I have to bring this for lunch.” [Ryouma]

I took the plate of tacos and several herb tablets, and went to where Elia and the others were.

I set up the table, serving the tacos alongside barley tea, then I went outside, and called everyone for lunch.

“Lunch is ready! Take a break for now!” [Ryouma]

At my words, everyone stopped what they were doing, and they looked toward my direction. After I invited them inside, we had our lunch.

“This is delicious.” [Elia]

“It’s easy to eat too; just like a sandwich.” [Michelle]

“It’s a lot better than having to eat course menu.” [Kanan]

“It seems like the kind of food you’d see at a stall.” [Miyabi]

“Ahh, now that you mention it it does give that impression.” [Riera]

The girls don’t seem to hate the food, and seem to be accepting of stall food. I might add this on to the menu if I ever put up a stall again.

And then the topic moved to the practice. Actually, it was more because I was curious, and I asked them what they thought.

“So how’s the training?” [Ryouma]

The first to answer were the two members of the sword team.

“Cutting bamboo is so hard, but it’s definitely new.” [Kanan]

“I have my hands full just blocking the mimic slime’s attacks, but it definitely feels like a real fight.” [Riera]

They seem motivated. There also doesn’t seem to be any danger of them pushing themselves too hard.

How about the magic team...

“It’s a kind of training we’ve never done back at the academy, so yeah, I’m the same, I think it’s new.” [Miyabi]

“I never thought it’d be so difficult to release such small amounts of magic power.” [Michelle]

“It might be difficult, but I’ll definitely show you that I can do it.” [Elia]

These girls also seem motivated, but it looks like magic control’s a lot harder than they expected it to be. Especially, Elia. She has a lot of magic power, so it’s a lot harder for her to hold back her strength... I should prepare them a routine they can do even back at their academy.

“You’ll gradually progress as long as you keep it up, so please don’t give up. Controlling your magic will also become easier as you progress in your ability to sense magic.” [Ryouma]

“Really?” [Elia]

“Being able to tell how a certain amount of magic feels... Even if you’re only able to do it roughly, it’ll still make things easier when controlling magic.” [Ryouma]

Elia fell into a deep thought for a few seconds, then she vigorously nodded to me several times.

We continued to eat after that. It didn’t take much longer to finish everything up though. After which, the girls took a short break, then they started their training again.

“Ryouma-san, what’ll we be doing for the afternoon.” [Elia]

“We’ll continue your magic perception training for a while, and then we’ll do some basic target practice.” [Ryouma]

As I had them train their magic perception for a little longer, I went to the two girls of the sword group.

“Are you ready?”

“Yes! Please take care of us!” [Riera & Kanan]

As the two girls greeted me in keigo(?) – probably because it’s training period – I started explaining the contents of their training for the afternoon. Their next training is a bit special.

“You two will be fighting against each other next, but...” [Ryouma]

When I cut my words, the two girls looked at me. But almost immediately after, they moved their gaze to the small box I took out of my Item Box. Inside were several sets of thin chains and dog tags upon which were engraved a flower and a number. I took out one.

“In this afternoon’s spar, Riera will have to wear this around her neck as she fights.” [Ryouma]

“What is that?” [Riera]

“This is imbued with a weak ‘Weakness’ curse that’ll induce your body to become weak. ‘Weakness’ changes depending on the strength of its caster. A strong caster could use it to weaken his opponent to death. But the curse imbued within this dog tag is weak. The most it can do is restrict your movements.” [Ryouma]

“...So in other words, the bamboo-cutting in the morning was to train our strength. And now, what we will be training is our technique?” [Riera]

Riera asked to confirm her conjecture. It seems she’s already guessed my intentions.

Fighting with this dog tag equipped will weaken one’s strength. But in exchange, that person will be able to train his technique. Fighting or defending with just brute strength will become difficult, so the parts where one is relying too much on strength will become apparent. Incidentally, this can also serve as training for when one can’t fight.

This method of training can only work on someone with actual strength and an ambition to improve. Otherwise, even with this on, that person won’t notice the mistakes he is making. Or he’ll notice them, but he won’t accept them. But Riera should be able to do it. And if there’re things she can’t see, then I’ll just point them out to her.

“I’ve always lost to Riera, but with that around her neck, I might just be a match for her.” [Kanan]

“That’s not all. If your body is exposed to a curse for an extended period. Then if your lucky, you might just develop a resistance toward it. That’s also another aim of this training.” [Ryouma]

Speaking of which, when I was cursed, I gained the skill, weakness resistance. That skill merged with the rest of my other resistances, giving birth to the skill ‘Wellbeing’. Thanks to that though the resistant-class section of my status board now feels so lonely, but let’s just put that aside...

Riera equipped the dog tag, and she started sparring with Kanan.

“...My body and my shield are a lot heavier than I thought...” [Rirera]

Because of the curse, Riera’s movements were a lot slower, so Kanan who was still able to move nimbly was able to force her into a defensive position. But Riera wouldn’t just so easily accept defeat. She carefully watched Kanan’s movements, waiting for an opportunity to strike. Their sparring session continued in a stalemate like that.

This’ll be good training for both of them.

10 minutes later, Riera’s tenacity finally paid off, and she was able to land a strike at Kanan’s body. A narrow victory. Well, I should be going to the magic team now...

I took the three girls of the magic team to a slightly distant place where they could safely cast their spells. There, they did their usual routine. However, Michelle and Miyabi ran out of magic power surprisingly quick. There’re some ingredients available anyway, so I might as well prepare some magic recovery potions starting tomorrow.

In any case, the first day of training for the magic team was finally over. Elia and the two others said they’ll make supper again tonight, so I left it to them, and I went to the

two girls who were still training. After we all ate together, we all said our goodbyes.

CHAPTER 3

MEDICINE MAKING

The Next Day

“The training today’s the same as yesterday, so please split yourselves into the two groups before, and then begin your training.” [Ryouma]

After Ryouma instructed the girls, he excused himself to make some medicine, and then he went to the medicine room. This was because Ryouma had not yet finished concocting Michelle and Miyabi’s magic recovery potions.

Ryouma tried making them last night, but after finding out his ingredients were nearing their expiry, he decided to use those particular ingredients to create the potion.



Unfortunately, one of the ingredients nearing their expiry, the root of a tree known as tolmandor, needed to be soaked in alcohol overnight to bring out its effects. So until then Ryouma was left with no choice but to do other preliminary work or mix other medicine. Which is why, Ryouma could only make the medicine now.

As Ryouma entered the medicine room, he went to the center where the workbench was, and he quickly prepared the tools he needed such as the pots and the containers. Then he took out a vial in which splinters of wood taken from the floor of the medicine room could be seen submerged in liquid.

“Identify’... OK.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma poured the contents into the pot, filling it with the brown alcohol that had absorbed the medicinal efficacy of the tolmandor. Ryouma then added distilled water twice the amount of the brown alcohol, cooked the pot with the flame slime, and then

the unnecessary water started evaporating.

“I’ll just leave this for a while...” [Ryouma]

Next he took out two of the three medicinal plants he prepared prior, and cut them. Then he grinded them with the pestle & mortar while keeping an eye out for the boiling pot.

As he quietly continued his work, he noticed that the amount of liquid in the pot had finally returned back to the levels before he added the distilled water, so he stopped the fire, and he took out a transparent vial from the cupboard.

Then he poured exactly 1 liter of that transparent liquid into the pot, and then he mixed it with a spatula as he added a little bit of the medicinal plants he grinded.

Speckles of dark gray and green started to float up the brown liquid in the pot, making the liquid inside look like muddy water. He let that liquid cool down until it reached the temperature of a bath’s waters, then Ryouma added the last medicinal plant.

That medicinal plant was light pink all over, while its petals were a beautiful color of vivid orange and a hue of red reminiscent of fire. Ryouma lifted the lid off the pot, then he added this plant into the mixture. A few seconds later, the color of the liquid changed to amber, and it started to shine a gentle light.

“This reaction is always so beautiful...” [Ryouma]

Ryouma gazed at that light for a while, then he filtered it with a clean cloth, and then he called over a big medicine slime, (In the past three years, his medicine slimes grew to number 150.) who then brought with it small bottles and caps that looked much like the ones used for cosmetic samples.

After that, Ryouma grouped the magic potions he finished making into batches, and then he filled the small bottles with the mixture he made. After the slime covered the

bottles with their caps, it took them away. Ryouma and the slime continued to work like this for a while, until---

“Good! It’s done~...” [Ryouma]

Right after filling up the last bottle, Ryouma rubbed the area in between his eyes as he muttered that. He currently had 250 potions. Each of which was able to restore 5000 magic power. Ryouma gave 50 potions to the big medicine slime, while he stored the remaining 200 into his Item Box. Then he left the medicine room.



“Thank you for your efforts.” [Elia]

The first one to realize Ryouma’s return was Elia, and she called out to him while still in the middle of her practice. Following after her were Miyabi and Michelle who thanked Ryouma for the magic potions. But as it was already noon, Ryouma suggested to have lunch first. After they called the sword team over, they had their lunch.

Elia and the others didn’t want to impose too much on Ryouma by asking him to make them lunch every day, so this time around, they had bentous ordered from the inn. Of course, Ryouma’s portion was included in that as well. As they ate, they talked about medicine.

“Ryouma-han, about the potion...” [Miyabi]

“Putting it bluntly, exactly how much would all those potions run for?” [Michelle]

“Hmm... I used ingredients near their expiry, so I don’t think you really have to worry too much over it, but... Excluding the ingredients which were homegrown and the labor costs... The potions I made for the two of you – 200 potions all in all – would go for about 16,000 suits.”

After hearing the cost, Miyabi started thinking. Seeing that, Ryouma spoke.

“Miyabi, you really don’t need to worry about it.” [Ryouma]

If they need it, they should just use it. Ryouma made sure that they knew that he didn't have any intentions of trying to forcefully make money from them.

"No, I'll pay. These sort of things need to be properly handled. Besides, 200 potions for 16,000 would mean 80 suits per bottle. That's cheaper than if I were to buy some normally." [Miyabi]

The price of magic recovery potions depends on the amount restored and the quality of the potions, but even 100 suits is considered cheap for a potion that could restore 500 to 1000 magic power. Since the market price could be thought of as equal to an adult's daily wage, Ryouma's proposed price could be said to be cheap.

"If you insist, I'll take it, but..." [Ryouma]

Do you really have that much spare money? Is what Ryouma wanted to say but hesitated to. Regardless, however, Michelle was able to sense what he was thinking, so she said.

"You don't have to worry since we made some money thanks to you." [Michelle]

"Money?" [Ryouma]

"We betted on you back at the magic tournament. Didn't we tell you?" [Michelle]

"Not at all, actually. And didn't you say you didn't gamble?" [Ryouma]

Ryouma recalled hearing that when he first brought the five of them to the arena.

"It's because we were seating in the noble seats. There, we could easily call for an official to make a bet without standing... One of the officials said to Elia, "Betting on the participant is also a form of support," and so she betted on your victory, Ryouma-dono. Although she did bet the least amount she could." [Michelle]

"Because of that, we figured we'd also bet ourselves." [Miyabi]

"And because Ryouma-san won, our money came back." [Elia]

“We also informed the official to place all the winnings into your next match should you win. Which I’m sure he didn’t expect as you only use slimes. But as a result, we made quite a profit.” [Sebasu]

“The profit’s good and all, but it’s a bit much to waste it on just random stuff, so just take some of it as compensation.” [Miyabi]

After hearing the five girls and Sebasu’s explanation, Ryouma thought, “Then in that case, I shouldn’t insist on refusing.” Then he agreed, and they continued to happily eat together.

“Is it hard to make magic recovery potions? Medicine’s outside my specialty, but I do have an interest in it.” [Kanan]

“There’re all sorts, and easier ones just need to be mixed in the right amounts, while the harder ones need preliminary work and will take lots of effort to make, right?” [Michelle]

“Right. And as you’d expect, the more effective potions have a tendency to be harder to make. Although, of course, there are also those that still work well despite being easy to mix.” [Ryouma]

“How about the medicine you made just now?” [Kanan]

“The preliminary work needed a night to finish, but the concoction itself is easy. Unfortunately, because the ingredients it uses can usually only be found in dangerous areas, gathering the ingredients is actually the harder part.” [Ryouma]

Aside from Michelle who had a medicine researcher for her mother, the rest of the girls weren’t familiar with medicine, so they asked a lot of question. Michelle and Ryouma answered each and every one of them.

Then this question came.

“Ryouma-dono, where did you study how to make medicines? Since you didn’t go to the academy, then did you study at the medic guild?” [Riera]

Medic Guild, as the name implies, is a guild for researchers who study healing magic and medicine. It’s also the guild responsible for raising doctors and nurses, as well as

providing them should their services be required. (There are also people who register to the guild after learning under a registered doctor or nurse.)

There aren't any special qualifications needed to call oneself a doctor. But in order to be registered to the guild, one must at least have some knowledge and ability relating to medicine, so the patients can be assured. It'll also be easier to manage them if they're registered. Which is why in most bigger towns, over half of the doctors and nurses in the hospitals and medical centers are registered with the guild.

"No, it wasn't the guild, but my grandmother who taught me. My grandmother was the village's doctor and was also a researcher herself, so around that time I learned a little from her... Nowadays, I'm studying to continue my grandmother's research." [Ryouma]

"What kind of research?" [Michelle]

When the word 'research' came out, Michelle responded faster than anyone else. Ryouma was already used to Michelle's attitude, and he responded with his usual response.

"The recreation of my grandmother's old medicines. Have you heard of the Silt Kingdom?" [Ryouma]

All the girls except for Michelle shook their heads. As for Michelle, she squeezed out the knowledge she had, and she slowly answered.

"That's the ruined country, right? According to my mother, that's the country that excelled the most in medicine. But that's about all I know regarding it..." [Michelle]

"Then let me give a quick explanation." [Ryouma]

Ryouma took a few seconds to put his thoughts together, then he spoke.

The Silt Kingdom was a small country, but because of a plague that once spread, the townsmen, the nobles, and even the royalty suffered greatly. Moreover, because the surrounding countries all feared the spread of the plague, they cut off all connections,

and refused any calls for support or trade. Thus, the country drew ever closer to ruin.

But although their once large population had been greatly reduced, the remaining aristocrats and royalty of the Silt Kingdom worked hard to raise healers and doctors. Even townspeople started gathering knowledge for themselves regarding medicine. As much as possible they took care, and made preventing even requiring treatment in the first place a priority.

Because of that, Silt Kingdom's golden age was a time of prosperity in healing magic and medicine. They became number one in the world, both in paper and reality, when it came to medicinal knowledge and healing techniques.

“So what grandma was researching was the knowledge and technique of the world's most advanced country in medicine. Their medicine was supposedly able to not only heal wounds, but even restore lost body parts. The name of their medicine is unknown, so for the sake of convenience, it's currently called, “Elixir”.” [Ryouma]

“Could such a dreamlike medicine actually exist?” [Michelle]

Half interested and half dubious, all eyes gathered on Ryouma. Being on the receiving end of such gazes, Ryouma responded as expected.

“It can't be helped if you think such medicine is dreamlike. After all, there's no definite proof of its existence... But there are old documents found in the ruins as well as the descriptions suggesting at their existence written in the medical certificates of the patients written by the doctors then. There's also the theory that suggests that other countries might've heard from somewhere of the Silt Kingdom's elixirs, and attacked their country because of them.

Which is why grandma says that the possibility an elixir or a medicine with proportionate effect is high.” [Ryouma]

Even if an elixir can be made, it still remains a question whether it could actually be given to the suffering people. It wouldn't be strange for it not to be given if it is a medicine too difficult to acquire.

Moreover, if there's a way to be cured, and yet that way can't be provided to the suffering people, then conflict might arise out of that suffering. But despite that, grandma still wanted to recreate that elixir.

Said Ryouma as he read out aloud the note left by his grandmother and the information he got from his inheritance, while Sebasu and all the six girls listened carefully to his words.

“What a splendid person.” [Riera]

As Riera muttered that, the other people also agreed.

“So Ryouma-kun, you're continuing that same research then?” [Michelle]

Ryouma could only smile bitterly to Michelle's next words.

“Whether you could actually say that is a difficult question... After all, even with just recreating grandma's incomplete medicines, I can't create anything else except for medicines loaded with horrible side effects, making them no different from poison.

I also can't find a better combination of medicinal, poisonous plants, and other ingredients to create a better medicine. Even with just improving, my knowledge is lacking.” [Ryouma]

The main points of her research have all been consolidated in the inheritance. If it weren't for that, Ryouma would've taken much longer just to recreate her medicine. That was how deep the knowledge that the “Sage”, Melia, left in those books.

Ryouma did consider bringing the books to the medicine guild, but because of the possibility of the books being taken away to a place he couldn't reach, he instead, decided to spend night after night, studying the contents of the inheritance.

Him completing the medicine aside, at the very least, Ryouma could definitely ensure

that the research results and materials could reach a suitable place before he dies. But before that, although a little, Ryouma also had in him the desire to personally complete the elixir with his own two hands. Because of that, Ryouma remained firm on his decision not to borrow the medicine guild's help.

“Something like this can't be rushed after all... So for now, I'll just continue to store up knowledge. Looking at it long term, at the very least, 10 years.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma chuckled as he said that, then that gentle atmosphere for talk ended. After they finished eating the remaining food in their bentou, the girls rested for a little, then they returned to training.

Later, in the magic training after this, all eyes will gather on Ryouma's magic potion as his potions' efficacy prove to be far higher than anything Miyabi or Michelle could've thought. But as for now, the girls were still unaware.

CHAPTER 4

MICHELLE'S CURIOSITY

One week later

In the mines north of Gimuru, we are once again hard at training. However, the master of the mine, Ryouma-kun isn't around. He had work today, so we borrowed the place, and are training hard by ourselves.

He did suggest to take a break for the day, but we wanted to learn as much as we can while we're here, so we rejected the offer. Because of that, we're working hard, training by ourselves. Oh, but it's currently break time though. All work and no rest wouldn't do us any good, so we have to make sure to take ample rest.

I drank the tea before me, then I rested for a breath or two.

"Fuu..." [Michelle]

"You seem to be doing well today, Michelle." [Elia]

"It took me a week, but I think I've finally gotten the hang of it. I'm still failing once every five times though." [Michelle]

The magic called 'Heat' is really efficient. It can quickly heat up an object with just a small amount of magic power. But that's also the reason why it's easy to use too much magic power... Ryouma-kun said it's convenient since he no longer needs to go to the kitchen just to make tea, but because it's so efficient, it's actually quite difficult to use. It's a lot faster than boiling water normally, so if I could get used to it, it could be really useful. Unfortunately, I'm still ways off... Still, it's undoubtedly interesting.

Ever since a young age, I've always been more knowledgeable at magic compared to other noble children. My grades in theory and practical ability are all exceptional. At the very least, I'm top 1 in class. It might be because of my father's influence, but somehow somehow, I naturally turned out like this. So when I see a magic I've never

heard of before, I can't help but be interested.

But at the same time... that begs a question. Just who in the world is Ryouma-kun?

He is Elia's friend and a year younger than me. He is a master magician and martial artist, and at the same time, there is also the possibility that he knows Alchemy. He is also a slime researcher, and a skilled merchant. He's good at inventing things... These are the first things that comes to mind when I think of him. I guess it can't be helped. The more I try to think of a way to ask him about Alchemy, more and more questions pop out.

"Michelle? Is something the matter?" [Miyabi]

"Are you thinking about something again?" [Elia]

"Right... I just can't help but wonder, just who exactly is Ryouma? I know he's not a bad person, but there's no doubting that he's really mysterious..." [Michelle]

"Well, that's true. Although, it is a bit late to be saying that." [Elia]

There is one thing that comes to mind though... And that's that Ryouma is actually a "Child of God," just like those from the legends. (?) If Ryouma-kun is actually a Child of God, then his abilities and strength could be attributed to his power as a Child of God. While that doesn't really explain anything, I could at least come to terms with it. Also, from what I've been told, Elia first met him in a forest where he's been living all alone by himself. That matches the description spoken of when the Children of God appears before humans.

But the Children of God only appear once every few hundred years. Moreover, only one. Though in some extremely rare cases, two. Regardless, the chance of meeting one in this world is absurdly low. The nobles once put up an orphanage after finding out the Children of God appear as orphans, but in the end, they couldn't find any, and they suffered great losses. Some say that they even went bankrupt.

But from that, is it even realistic to think that there could be someone with talent comparable to that of a Child of God? The Sage, Melia-sama, and the Martial God, Teagle-sama... Those two exceptional people were born, so it's certainly not

impossible for people rivalling the power of a Child of God to appear. I don't know how accurate the legends regarding the Children of God are, but...

"It doesn't really matter who Ryouma-kun is though." [Riera]

"Like hell it doesn't matter!!" [Michelle]

"Bringing up a topic, then going silent, while your brain catches fire as you start thinking a lot." [Riera]

"Ah, sorry, it's my bad habit again. Still, you sure understand me well, Riera. As expected, I guess." [Michelle]

"Well, there were plenty of instances before, so... Anyway, what has you thinking so much?" [Riera]

"Hmm... Well, I am curious who Ryouma-kun is, but I think it also doesn't matter after all. More than that, I'm more curious about his magic." [Michelle]

"You're the same as ever, huh? Being concerned about Ryouma-kun's magic." [Kanan]

"If I were to put it simply, it's the way he conceptualizes things. He's only a bit different from normal magicians, but that's also what makes him interesting." [Michelle]

For example, when he first thought us 'Heat', he did not heat the target with a fire made of magic, but simply focused on increasing the temperature itself. Normally, a person would immediately think of fire when he wants to heat something – which, by the way, I would find perfectly reasonable.

He also showed us several different magic yesterday, but each and every one of them were intriguing.

Aside from heat, he also had various other magic, such as 'Crack', which applied the earth magic, Break Rock, to create a fissure inside stone walls, allowing him to dismantle buildings. He also had the magic, 'Stone Cutting', a magic that allows one to cut out stone useable for construction from boulders. Or the magic, "Ridge", which controls the earth in the fields, allowing one to create a ridge.

Those were all magic meant for either farm work or quarry work... It's true that there are certainly people who use magic in that industry, but even a magician wouldn't bother to create everything with magic. Besides, farm work and quarry work can both

be done even without magic. There're rarely anyone who would purposely go out of his way to create a new magic just to do those things.

And that's exactly why I can't help but see him as an eccentric man.

"You know I could actually listen to you guys forever." [???

As I was speaking my thoughts to the others, I heard a voice from the entrance.

"I'm home~" [Ryouma]

"Huh? Ryouma-kun?" [Michelle]

"Are you in the middle of your break? You must've been training hard. (?) I finished my work earlier than expected, so I took a stroll around town, then I went back home."
[Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, a trace of fatigue could be seen on his face.

"Is there something the matter?" [Elia]

"A little. I dropped by the Adventurer's Guild, and somehow, I ended up being scheduled for my B Rank promotion exam." [Ryouma]

"Oh! Congratulations!" [Elia]

"So you'll be a B Rank adventurer soon. Congratulations, Ryouma-dono. It seems you'll also be joining the ranks of the first-class adventurers." [Riera]

"You're all going too fast, I'm still a C Rank, you know." [Ryouma]

"Since it's you, Ryouma-sama, I'm sure you'll pass the test just fine. Here, have some tea." [Sebasu]

"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

The reason behind his fatigue didn't seem to only be because of the promotion exam, but Ryouma-kun didn't look like he wanted to talk about it, so no one pursued, and Sebasu-san offered him tea.

“Are you done for the day?” [Kanan]

“Ah... I’ll be resting for a while, but I’ll be making food for the goblins later. So I’ll have to gather some ingredients.” [Ryouma]

“Then in that case, let me help.” [Elia]

“If there’s anything I can do, let me help too.” [Michelle]

The other three also said the same thing as they offered their help.

“Is it really alright?” [Ryouma]

“You’ve helped us a lot, after all.” [Riera]

“Thank you.” [Ryouma]

And after Ryouma finished drinking tea, the first job he left to us was to gather the mutated crops.

“Mutated Crops? That doesn’t sound very good. Surely, you’re not talking about the claymore corns, right?” [Kanan]

“Don’t worry, I’ll gather the Claymore Corns myself. You five will be handling the weaker ones. They’ll only be running away when you try to gather them, so at most, it’ll just be a bit annoying.” [Ryouma]

Crops that can run!? What in the world’s that supposed to be!?

“Sebasu-san knows the place, he’ll take you there.” [Ryouma]

As Ryouma-kun said that, he used dimension magic, and vanished.

“Let us be on our way then.” [Sebasu]

Sebasu-san used his dimension magic as well, and he took us to Ryouma-kun’s laboratory. The room was wide, and there was no ceiling. Wind would blow in freely as the sun’s rays lit the place bright... In fact, with the surrounding walls, the place

looked a lot closer to a courtyard. On the soft earth could be seen verdant flowery vines extending a meter forward and backward. There were too many vines to count, but they were clearly over a thousand of them.

“Are these the crops that Ryouma-san was talking about?” [Elia]

“Yes, this is one of the crops Ryouma-sama mutated. He calls it, the Snake Gobo. (?) If this magical beast were to be ranked, it would be F Rank. It’s always extending vines out of the ground, so it’s easy to fight. It’s fighting power is also virtually nil.” [Sebasu]

“Do we just pull it out?” [Elia]

“Yes. It’ll try to come back under the ground once you do, but as long as you cut at the boundaries of the vines and the roots, then it’ll stop moving.” [Sebasu]

As Sebasu-san said that, he nimbly caught a vine, and pulled it out. At the end of the vine was a snake-like wriggling object that resembled a tree’s roots. No, actually, those ARE roots. As soon as Sebasu-san took that vine, the surrounding vines all ran at the speed of an adult human.

“They can really run...” [Miyabi]

“Ladies, please use these baskets.” [Sebasu]

Who knows where he pulled it out from, but Sebasu-san brought out some baskets. We carried those on our backs, and we started chasing after the vines. When we caught one, we would put them in the basket. Time passed, and we continued to work, but...

“Haa... Haa...” [Elia]

“This job is really simple, but... It’s actually quite difficult...” [Miyabi]

Elia and Miyabi didn’t have much strength, so they’re having a hard time. We can’t surround the vines with the six of us, so even I’m starting to get tired... On the other hand, Riera and Kanan are treating this like exercise as they caught vine after vine. Sebasu-san’s also having an easy time with his dimension magic.

We naturally split the work of processing and catching. Then after continuing this

process as we took turns---

“Well done. It seems you’ve caught quite a bit.” [Ryouma]

“Ryouma-kun!? Since when did you---“ [Michelle]

“Oh, sorry. Did I surprise you? I used dimension magic.” [Ryouma]

It looks like he wasn’t trying to scare me, but if you call out to me from behind, of course, I’ll be scared... I couldn’t even hear your footsteps too... As I said that, he lightly bowed his head to me. Then after taking a look at the Snake Gobos we’ve caught, he called out to the others.

“This is enough! Thank you very much for your help!” [Ryouma]

I tried counting the total number of Snake Gobo, and it turned out to total to about 400. Ryouma-kun took all those into his Dimension Home, then he teleported to the tunnel he uses as a wine cellar. Apparently, Ryouma’s been buying an amazing amount of liquor.

He took barrel after barrel from his Dimension Home. It came to a point when he went past 20 barrels.

“Ryouma-kun, just how many did you buy?” [Michelle]

“I bought about 50 barrels today. The owner of the liquor shop needs some help maintaining his storehouse, so he sells these to me for cheap.” [Ryouma]

Even then, I think you’re still buying too much... Around this time, a bottle made out of rock that was sitting in a corner of the wine cellar on a shelf caught my eye. This is also probably wine, but is there a store that sells wine in rock bottles?

“That’s the wine Ryouma-sama makes as a hobby.” [Sebasu]

Sebasu-san said that when he noticed me looking toward the rock bottle on the shelf.

“Ryouma-kun, you can even make wine?” [Michelle]

“I make them with a mixture of the slime’s alcohol and fruit juices or medical liquor. I also sometimes make them with magic, but then the taste is a bit unpredictable.” [Ryouma]

Making wine with magic!? I’ve heard of people making wine as their family business, but I’ve never heard of anyone making wine with magic!

“What kind of magic is that?” [Michelle]

My voice clearly resounded in the tunnel, and Ryouma, having finally finished unloading all of his baskets, answered.

“It all started a few years ago when I fought against a magical beast that could use a kind of dark magic that would cause metal to rust. I tried recreating its magic, and from that, I found a way to spur the reaction to occur.” [Ryouma]

Magic that makes metal rust can make alcohol?

“...In other words?” [Michelle]

“Hmm... How should I explain it... Even if I don’t use magic, as long as I leave metal around it’ll rust. But with the magic, ‘Reaction’, I can make it rust faster. But the only thing that’ll rust is metal. Meat and vegetables on the other hand will---“

If you leave meat and vegetable lying around... I know! They’ll rot! So in their case, they’ll rot faster. And spoilage and fermentation – just like medicine and poison – is only a question of how the person uses it.

“So in other words, you’re using that magic to ferment the ingredients and brew alcohol.” [Michelle]

When I said that, Ryouma replied with a 'Correct' as he clapped his hands.

"The taste changes with the extent of the fermentation. Sometimes, a bad odor would be left too. I've tried out different ingredients, but the results were all a matter of luck. I can't make a lot, so I only work on it when I feel like it. I've also tried making liquor with ingredients other than grapes...

There're also products I was able to make well once, but couldn't make again.

...Even though if I included that in in the ingredients when I made it, I could've made more." [Ryouma]

Ryouma seemed frustrated as he remembered something, but after that, he snapped himself back, and he talked about his magic. Apparently, there's another magic opposite of 'Reaction'. A light magic known as 'Preservation' which fights against deterioration. Miyabi's curiosity was also piqued when she caught wind of the topic, so she also joined in the conversation.

Meanwhile, the three girls, Riera, Kanan, and Elia, were quietly waiting on the side while Ryouma was explaining. When Ryouma finished explaining, he remembered them, and he quickly apologized, but the three didn't really mind.

...Ah, come to think of it, I'm also a culprit. Looks like I also lost myself when the topic turned to magic. But I still have a lot I want to talk about. I wonder if we'll have enough time during our stay...

CHAPTER 5

After storing the wine in the wine cellar, Elia and the others went with Ryouma to a particular room where the atmosphere was reminiscent of that of a school cafeteria. As for why the girls followed him into this room, that would be because they said they also wanted to help with the cooking. In the oval room they entered, could be seen a kitchen counter at the center, and several giant stoves and iron plates along the edges of the room.

“You sure brought out another amazing room.” [Miyabi]

“I think the five of us could actually ride on this curved frying pan.” [Kanan]

“Can you even lift this thing?” [Michelle]

What Elia and the other four girls were looking at were the cooking utensils Ryouma created to be used with Qi Gong. And by curved frying pan, they were of course referring to the wok. These giant utensils were made for times when Ryouma needs to create a large amount of food such as when trainees come or when he needs to feed the goblins. Without paying much attention to the girls, Ryouma took out the giant utensils and ingredients he’ll be using today one after another, placing them on top of the kitchen counter. After which, he then took out of the Dimension Home the slimes he picked up after he separated from Elia’s group.

The slimes he took out are as follows:

Big Cleaner Slime x9

Big Metal Slime x10

Big Water Slime x1

Flame Slime x10

Mimic Slime (Transformed into Ryouma) x1

Total: 31 Slimes

As Ryouma gave out orders to the slimes, the big cleaner slimes washed the tools and ingredients over the kitchen counter, while the big water slimes filled the water tank

in the room with clean water, and the flame slimes entered the stove ready to light a flame at any moment.

“First, let’s prepare the vegetables.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma’s menu for the day is fried rice, Gyoza, and Chopped-Burdock Root. He chose these dishes after thinking of what’s easy to make in large volumes. After he taught the girls how to cut the vegetables – Finely chop the cabbage. Cut the Snake Burdock into thin strips... etc. – the girls spoke.

“Making so much food seems so hard... I can’t believe you actually prepare all these by yourself.” [Michelle]

“Yeah, but I manage somehow with the help of the slimes. As you can see, the big cleaner slimes are working hard, and the flame slimes can start a fire at a moment’s notice.

There’s also the mimic slime who’s helping me out. And more than anything, the big metal slimes are a huge help.” [Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, he took a ball of cabbage, cut it with a knife, and removed the pith. Meanwhile, a cleaner slime was cleaning a big metal slime. After being cleaned, that big metal slime extended its body vertically, and then it protruded out two tentacles from its sides.

At that, Ryouma set a giant bowl, and he ordered that same big metal slime to transform its body’s upper part into a 40cm x 30cm oval. On the edges of that oval shape appeared a row of blade and holes similar to that of a plane used for woodwork. In front of which a sharp blade, facing up, would appear periodically.

After transforming, the hollowed tentacles of the big metal slime stretched towards the bowl that Ryouma had earlier set.

“With this, everything’s good to go.” [Ryouma]

Elia and the others looked like they wanted to ask Ryouma what exactly it was he had prepared, but Ryouma just ignored them as he placed the pith-less cabbage over the transformed big metal slime.

“Please watch carefully.”

Ryouma smoothly pushed the cabbage into the blades, and as the vertical blade entered the cabbage, the blade at the side cut the cabbage off, causing it to fall and enter the holes. As it entered the holes, the cut cabbage passed through the slime’s tentacles, sliding itself smoothly into the bowl, splendidly and finely chopped.

Ryouma continued this process at a good pace, changing the way he held the cabbage from time to time. Then in a twinkling, the whole ball of cabbage had already been finely chopped.

“Something like this... I guess. The speed changes depending on the strength of the user, but in general, slimes can be used like this to cut soft and light things easily. So it’s really convenient to have a slime like this in one’s home.”

Ryouma puffed his chest out as he gave that salesman-like talk, while the girls reacted.

“It’s certainly convenient.” [Elia]

“Doesn’t this tool look similar to the tool used to cut meguribushi?” [Miyabi]

“With this even I can do it!” [Michelle]

“...Isn’t this technically just another application of slave demon magic?” [Kanan]

“Does it matter? With this, everything’ll be easier.” [Riera]

Understanding, happiness, curiosity, the emotions the girls felt were all different from each other, but regardless, they all understood what the tool did.

After that, Ryouma had the big metal slimes split. Then he had one of the slimes transform into a peeler, and he showed the girls how to use it to peel off the skin of vegetables. He showed several various goods from his previous life to the girls,

teaching them how to use them.

As the five girls were cutting the vegetables, Ryouma ordered the mimic slime while he was steaming the rice to prepare the wrapping of the Gyoza. After which, he started preparing for the Gyoza's red bean paste.

What he needed to prepare were the cut meat, the cabbage, the garlic, the other finely chopped vegetables, the sesame oil, the salt and pepper, and the rest of the various seasonings he needs. After gathering all of those he took them and put them all inside one giant pot. Then he used magic.

“Food Processor” [Ryouma]

In that instant, a small tornado summoned up inside the closed pot as blades of wind whirled about inside, cutting and mixing the ingredients within the pot. This is an original magic Ryouma created, taking inspiration from the advanced magic ‘Storm Cutter’. The killing potential of this magic is certainly there, but overall, it's a magic not catered toward battle, but for cooking.

With the help of the slimes and his magic, and even the girls' help, Ryouma did his best to make the rest of the menu.

As a result, Ryouma and the girls cooked until the sun was down. After cooking, Ryouma ordered the mimic slime and the space slimes to distribute the food. As for what Ryouma did during that time...

“...My arms are so heavy...” [Ryouma]

“After all that, it's not surprising.” [Elia]

Because Ryouma's load was lightened thanks to the girls offer to help, he decided to add Gyoza and fried rice to the menu. As a result, he's been doing nothing but shake the wok all day long.

After this, Ryouma and the others had the remaining food for supper, then Elia's group went back home. With the fatigue from making so much food and the sense of having accomplished something, Ryouma and the girls had a good night's rest.

CHAPTER 6

FINDING SOMETHING IN AN UNEXPECTED PLACE

Today, the girls were once again training at Ryouma's house.

"Five more minutes!" [Ryouma]

"Yes!" [Riera & Kanan]

Riera and Kanan replied to Ryouma as the sound of their swords striking against the bamboo grew even fiercer. If it were only that, then it would be no different from normal. But mixed in with the sound of their swords was the sound of bamboos falling one after another.

"Fu, Fu, Fu, Fuu..."

As for why there was also that sound mixed in, that's because Ryouma – who usually only gave them advice – was also cutting along with them. Unlike Riera and Kanan, Ryouma could cut at a significantly faster pace than the two. He could cut a bamboo every second, sometimes, even two. At Ryouma's inhuman pace, the surrounding bamboos slowly thinned out until eventually, only a barren land was left.

"...That's about it. The bamboo cutting training ends here." [Ryouma]

At those words, the two girls who were whole-heartedly cutting the bamboos stopped.

"Fu... I've gotten used to it already, but... I'm still a long way off." [Kanan]

"No worries though, we're cutting more bamboo than before, so we're definitely improving." [Riera]

"Exactly, keep it up, you two." [Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, he took some towels out of his Item Box, and handed it to the

two girls. The two girls used those towels to wipe their sweat as they spoke to Ryouma.

“Still... Ryouma-kun, I didn’t expect you to also train.” [Kanan]

“But of course, it’s not like people are born strong or anything.” [Ryouma]

But as an otherworlder, it also wasn’t completely wrong to say that Ryouma was strong from the start. Because of that, he unintentionally spoke vaguely.

“Well, in any case, it’s my first time seeing you train, Ryouma-dono.” [Riera]

“Now that you mention it, you never really trained in front of us when going back and forth here and the magic team’s side, huh?” [Kanan]

“You’ve advised us and shown us examples of how to do things, but I don’t think we’ve ever seen you train. Did something happen?” [Riera]

“Well, the promotion exam’s tomorrow, so I wanted to do something.” [Ryouma]

“Oh yeah, you did say something like that yesterday.” [Kanan]

“What’s the exam going to be about?” [Riera]

“I’ll be fighting an adventurer above the B Rank that the guild has chosen, while the guild master watches. I don’t really need to win though. As long as my strength is good enough, I’ll be promoted. So basically, a simple power test. It seems my opponent will be decided before the day ends.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma explained the details to the two girls.

“It would be great if we could help you train.” [Riera]

“Just say it if there’s anything we can do to help.” [Kanan]

Hearing that, Ryouma thought for a moment, then he suggested this.

“Then in that case... How about the both of you spar with me at the same time? There’s a new fighting style I want to try out.” [Ryouma]

“Alright.” [Kanan]

“Please let us help you.” [Riera]

Ryouma thanked the two girls, then after taking a five-minute break, they left the bamboo thickets.

“What I’ll be using now is a combination of magic and martial arts, a technique known as: Magic Battle Technique.” [Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, he lifted his hands, and fire wrapped around them.

“To put it simply, it’s the same thing as wrapping one’s body or weapon with magic power. It’s quite effective against undead-type magical beasts, and also easy to use once you’ve gotten used to it.” [Ryouma]

“...Isn’t that hot?” [Kanan]

“I’m maintaining it with magic power, so there’s no problem. It’s also making use of the concepts of magic barrier. That aside, I’m surprised neither of you are shocked. People are usually shocked whenever I show this to them.” [Ryouma]

“We’ve just gotten used to you. That aside, can I also learn how to do that?” [Riera]

With the two girls’ simple reactions, it seemed this wouldn’t take long to explain. Ryouma answered their question.

“Right away’s impossible. Magic Battle Technique requires exceptional control of magic power and technique. And if you can’t fight naturally while wrapping the magic power around your body or weapon, you’ll be left chock full of openings. But that’s only a matter of ‘now’. If you train, it shouldn’t be impossible to learn in the future.

“I’m sure it’ll also be a great help for an aspiring knight, so right... I guess I’ll add it to your training menu then.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma noticed that he was starting to digress, so he moved the topic back on course.

“Anyway, what I want to try out is a fighting style that employs neutral magic. It’s already been three weeks, but when I fought the five of you before, an idea came to

mind. I got caught up with a lot of other things, so I wasn't able to try it out, but I think now's a good time. This isn't that dangerous of a magic so please spar with me."
[Ryouma]

"Understood!" [Riera & Kanan]

Riera and Kanan unsheathed their swords, and Ryouma readied his fists. As they took their distance, the battle began. The first to attack was Kanan.

"Ha!" [Kanan]

As she approached Ryouma, she swung her sword diagonally down from her right. The results of her training were already showing, as the sword she swung was faster than when she first fought Ryouma in their duel. That sword of hers aimed for Ryouma's neck.

But Ryouma reflexively took a step back, dodging the sword's tip by a hair's breadth. But Kanan expected that, and she had already stepped in, twisting her hips, and sweeping with her right sword. At the same time, she struck with her left blade diagonally up. It was a two-hit combination!

Ryouma once again jumped back to the left, dodging her attack. However, this time he didn't just dodge, he also moved his right hand toward the direction of Kanan's sword to parry her attack. Then as if drawing a circle, he moved his body clockwise.

"Eh---Uwa!?"

As Kanan's sword missed Ryouma, her body flipped and she fell on her back. From the outside, it looked like she put in too much power in her swings, and ended up falling into the ground, but in truth, this wasn't her fault. As she immediately went back up on her feet, Riera made her move.

"Shi!"

A sharp thrust came headed for Ryouma's chest. But as if he was expecting her to make a move, Ryouma leapt to the right. At the same time, his left grabbed Riera's sword, and his right hand went for Riera's body. His body turned like a circle being drawn, and as Riera's sword was pulled down, her body was lifted.

Thrown into the air, Riera flipped, but just before she hit the ground, her body stopped moving. As she was floating in the air, positioned to take a fall, she muttered.

“Telekinesis' huh? ...Mind putting me down?” [Riera]

After Ryouma responded to Riera, the Telekinesis that held her body in the air slowly vanished, and Riera's body fell to the ground. After that, Ryouma started to explain.



After Ryouma had his movements sealed by Elia and the others in their duel before, he started wondering whether 'Telekinesis' – which normally wasn't used in combat – could be used for that purpose. What he showed the two girls just now is the result of that, a throwing technique based on 'Telekinesis'.

Lifting a person up with 'Telekinesis' by relying on the sheer strength of one's magic power, and then slamming that person into the ground is definitely possible. But that would result in needless waste of magic power. So instead, Ryouma thought to break the posture of his opponent, and then apply 'Telekinesis'. With the concepts of his Taijutsu which he learned from his previous life, breaking an opponent's posture should be more than possible. And once one's posture has been broken, 'Telekinesis' should be much easier to use, allowing him to conserve magic power.

After the short battle between him and the two girls, it would appear that his conjecture was indeed correct. Ryouma was able to spectacularly throw his opponents without even touching them once by relying on 'Telekinesis'. He was also able to confirm that the magic power consumed with this method was far lesser than when relying on just 'Telekinesis'. If he uses this technique discretely, he should be able to catch his opponent off guard.

After that, Ryouma continued to train with the two girls as he practiced using ‘Telekinesis’ with the fundamentals of Taijutsu to pull off all sorts of feats. For example: stealing the enemy’s weapon, stripping the enemy of his weapon, or even using ‘Telekinesis’ to wield a weapon.



After lunch, Ryouma watched over the magic group’s training as he trained his own magic. Just like Riera’s group, Elia and the other two girls also asked to help Ryouma, so they ended up having a magic spar. Elia used her ‘Telekinesis’ to move the wooden scarecrow targets, while Michelle and Miyabi defended them from Ryouma’s magic.

“‘Sleep Shot!’” [Miyabi]

“‘Earth Needle!’” [Ryouma]

As Ryouma dodged Miyabi’s poison-type elementary magic, ‘Sleep Shot’, which had the effect of inducing drowsiness on its target, Ryouma casted ‘Earth Needle’ toward the wooden scarecrows that Elia was moving around.

“‘Earth Wall!’” [Michelle]

“‘Stun Arrow!’” [Ryouma]

Right before the ‘Earth Needle’ hit the target, Michelle summoned up an ‘Earth wall’, blocking Ryouma’s ‘Earth needle’. Ryouma immediately followed up with an electric-type magic, ‘Stun Arrow’. But just when everyone thought it would hit the wall---

“!?” [Elia, Michelle, Miyabi]

The Stun Arrow suddenly changed its trajectory, and it went a long way around the wall, then hit the target.

“‘Flame Carpet’” [Ryouma]

“‘Ahh!?’” [Elia, Michelle, Miyabi]

While the three girls were still shocked, Ryouma completely destroyed the wooden scarecrow with his 'Flame Carpet'.

"We lost..." [Elia]

After the round ended, Elia and the others went to where Ryouma was.

"How did you do that with electric magic?" [Michelle]

When offensive electric-type magic is casted, normally, it would follow a straight line. Controlling its trajectory slightly is certainly possible, but Ryouma's 'Stun Arrow' didn't just change its course slightly. It took a long way around, dodging the wall, and hitting the target from the other side.

This was possible because Ryouma used the electric magic that could avert electric magic power, 'Ground'. This allowed him to dictate the path of the stun arrow, allowing him to make it hit the target from behind.

As Ryouma said that, Miyabi asked another question.

"Being able to move it is fine and all, but don't you also need to know the location of the target? [Miyabi]

"Of course, but I'm able to easily pinpoint its location with my Magic Perception." [Ryouma]

Because the things of this world have magic power, and because Elia needed to use 'Telekinesis' to move the target – meaning she had to wrap the target in neutral magic power – Ryouma was able to easily pinpoint where the target was.

"You could even do something like that with Magic Perception?" [Elia]

"Once you've gotten used to it, you could even tell what magic your opponent's going

to use. For example, by inferring from the shape of their magic power, like the spear-shaped magic power of the spell 'Flame Lance' or the ball-shaped 'Flame Bomb', you can easily dodge spells with good Magic Perception. Especially when it comes to 'lance' spells since they tend to just follow the direction of the spearhead.

If you get even better at it, you could even tell whether your opponent's about to use an elementary, intermediate, or advanced spell, by inferring from the amount of magic power they're releasing. And if you can tell what element the magic power they're releasing is, then you can predict their next move even better, and deal with their magic even more easier."

As I added on that explanation after Elia asked me, the three girls spoke.

"So that's why it seemed like you could tell what we were thinking." [Elia]

"I guess this is why you were able to easily dodge everything we threw at you then, huh?" [Michelle]

"In any case, we should train our Magic Perception and Magic Manipulation even more." [Miyabi]

As the three girls finally understood a piece of the puzzle behind Ryouma's strength, they grew even more determined to train. The three girls' training resumed, and Ryouma joined them as well. Of course, they took care not to overdo things.



And then... evening came. After training, Sebasu made supper for Ryouma and the five girls. Then they relaxed around while having some barley tea. It was here that Kanan sighed deeply.

"Fu~..." [Kanan]

"Something the matter? What're you sighing for all of the sudden?" [Miyabi]

"We got so fired up, my body's itching all over now." [Kanan]

Although they didn't train to the point of breaking their bodies, they still trained much

fiercer than normal, so the other girls couldn't help but agree with Kanan.

"They say you should have something sweet when you're tired, but there're no sweets at all anywhere. All the sugar were used up making supper." [Riera]

"Sweet things sure are expensive, aren't they?~" [Kanan]

"Would be nice if sugar were cheaper though." [Miyabi]

"If that were so, we would be able to make more things too." [Michelle]

It seems even girls are fond of sweets in this world as they suddenly started talking about them. But once they start talking about sweets...

"Talking about sweets is making me hungry..." [Elia]

"All the more so, since we're so tired." [Riera]

As everyone chuckled a troubled laugh, they drank the barley tea in their cups. A minute or two of idle chatter passed, when Ryouma suddenly started thinking of something.

"..." [Ryouma]

"Ryouma-san, is something the matter?" [Elia]

"Mn? Ah, it's nothing. It just felt like I was about to remember something about sweets..." [Ryouma]

"Like something you have in your house that you forgot about?" [Riera]

"No, I shouldn't have it." [Ryouma]

"Something you have to harvest then?" [Michelle]

"That's also not it, I think... But there's definitely something... Hmm... It sure feels weird having something at the tip of your mind, but not remembering." [Ryouma]

A few more minutes passed after that, and the girls continued to ask Ryouma questions as he answered them. Then just when Ryouma was on the verge of exhaustion from thinking, as soon as he took another sip of that barley tea in his cup, he suddenly remembered it.

“Ah!” [Ryouma]

“What?” [Elia]

“Wait here!” [Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, he immediately ran into the kitchen, desperate not to forget again. And when he came back, he had with him some tools and ingredients. Michelle asked him.

“Ryouma-kun, what is it all of the sudden? We don’t get what’s going on at all, so can you explain things a bit?” [Michelle]

“I think I might just be able to make some sweets with this.” [Ryouma]

What Ryouma handed to the girls was an ingredient they knew very well.

CHAPTER 7

RAISE YOUR SPIRITS

AND TAKE THE PROMOTION EXAM!

What was in Ryouma's hands was a bag filled with wheat. Other than that, he also brought with him some cooking utensils and rice.

"Isn't that just wheat?" [Miyabi]

"Can you make anything sweet with that?" [Michelle]

"You've never heard of mizuame? (?) This can be used to cook, and in fact, you can give this a lick without cooking it." [Ryouma]

Elia and the others were confused.

"I guess it tastes sort of like sugar." [Michelle]

"Hmm... As far as I know, the only ingredients used to make sweets are sugar, brown sugar, maple syrup, and honey. And then, I guess there're also fruits... As for this one, I've never heard of it." [Miyabi]

Hearing their responses, Ryouma was sure now that mizuame didn't exist in this country.

"Well, in any case, I'll just explain to you guys while I prepare it."

Ryouma lined up the various wares he'd brought with him. Amongst those were two medium-sized pots with two handles, a cloth used for concocting medicine, a mortar and pestle, and several bowls. First, Ryouma filled one of the pots with water.

"After filling the pot with water, we add the grinded rice grains. 'Heat'" [Ryouma]

As the wheat started boiling, the pot started blubbing and blurping.

“We’ll keep this boiling until it turns into a porridge. In the meantime...” [Ryouma]

Ryouma filled a bowl with wheat, but then he poured its contents back into the bag. Then he added it back into the bowl, and then back to the bag, and again, and again...

“Have you forgotten the amount you’re supposed to put?” [Riera]

“Grandma made it for me before, so I can just barely remember how to make it... I only just remembered about it a while ago too, so... Well, the amount of rice should be right, but... Ah, jeez, who cares anymore! Let’s just try it out. ‘Water’, and ‘Grow” [Ryouma]

Ryouma filled a third of the bowl with wheat, and then he casted water magic on it. Normally, he would leave this bowl of wheat and water for several days, changing the water from time to time to let it germinate, but Ryouma used wood magic to forcefully speed up the process.

Not long after, Ryouma threw away the water, took the germinated wheat, and grinded it with the mortar and pestle. Elia and the others were still dubious, but they helped out nevertheless.

And 20 minutes later.

The rice that was being boiled in boiling temperature finally started to lose its shape as it turned into a thin porridge. Ryouma added the grinded malt into this pot, causing a reaction between the starch in the rice and the enzyme in malt to create sugar.

But the temperature most suited for sugar was 60 degrees Celsius. The current temperature was too high, so Ryouma used water magic first to gradually cool the rice porridge.

“Well then, shall we start? After adding the malt, we lightly stir it, and then... I hope this works: ‘Reaction” [Ryouma]

Converting the starch to sugar would normally take a day, but with Ryouma's dark magic 'Reaction', he forcefully sped up the process. As he continued to stir the contents of the pot while casting magic, the thin porridge-like state of the contents gradually turned into liquid.

"I-It's starting to smell sweet!" [Kanan]

"Wow..." [Miyabi]

The two girls from the beast tribe had better noses, so they immediately noticed the slight change in the aroma. And just as they said, the smell was indeed sweet. Moreover, there weren't any rotting odors. But just to be safe, Ryouma still used 'Identify' on the new substance. After confirming that it wasn't poisonous, Ryouma filtered the contents of the pot with the cloth he brought. Then after removing any residue left, the mizuame was completed.

"It's complete!"

The finished product was like honey. There was also enough to fill an entire ricebowl. Ryouma then wrapped the finished product around some bamboo chopsticks.

"Freeze" [Ryouma]

Ryouma wasn't sure whether it was because he hadn't boiled it enough, but the resulting product wasn't viscous enough. So Ryouma had to use ice magic to lower the temperature and harden the syrup to make it stick to the chopsticks. Then he distributed it to Sebasu and the five girls. Of course, he also took some for himself.

"So this is mizuame..." [Michelle]

"It's made from rice, so it's also called komeame. Anyway, give it a try. First, you knead it like this, and then you let it breathe in the air like this..." [Ryouma]

Ryouma kneaded his own mizuame covered chopsticks. causing the mizuame to turn

white. As he did, he was reminded of the mizuame candies back in Japan. The mizuame was hardened with ice magic, so the more he kneaded it and the hotter it got, the softer it would be. So it's best to eat it quickly.

"Delicious! So nostalgic..." [Ryouma]

"Ah, it really is sweet." [Kanan]

"It has a unique taste, but it's not bad." [Michelle]

"It has a tender sweet taste to it." [Elia]

The sweetness of the mizuame left Ryouma in a state of nostalgia. The girls on the other hand, enjoyed the sweetness of the mizuame. While Ryouma was still immersed in nostalgia, Miyabi called out to him.

"Ryouma-han, since this is made with just wheat and rice, can I make some too?"
[Miyabi]

"Ah, right... Well, if it's just for personal use I don't mind. But if you want to sell it as a product, I'd like to have some special privileges to be able to use as much as I want both for my Slime Den Restaurant and myself. And also, you should make it not with rice but with potatoes." [Ryouma]

Ryouma stated his conditions for a short while, but Miyabi knitted her brows when she heard them.

"I'm sure dad won't have any problems with those conditions, but... Won't your share be too small?" [Miyabi]

"Nah, that's more than enough." [Ryouma]

Ryouma isn't a merchant who specializes at handling ingredients, so he's the same as a beginner in that field. Because of that he mostly relies on Gimuru's stores and Miyabi's family to stock up on ingredients. So when it comes to selling the mizuame, he doesn't have anyone else to turn to except for the Saionji Firm.

To begin with Ryouma didn't even make the mizuame with the intention of selling it.

He just ended up remembering it because of the flow of the conversation. So monopoly was the last thing on his mind. And that is exactly why Ryouma doesn't mind letting the Saionji Firm sell the mizuame as long as the Saionji Firm guarantees him and his Slame Den Restaurant enough mizuame to use as they please.

Ryouma explained that to Miyabi.

"I think that instead of trying to monopolize mizuame or hiding it, it's better to continue my good relationship with the Saionji Firm. Besides, I've gotten a lot of help from Piero-san too." [Ryouma]

"Well let's just leave it at that. Anyway, dad's the one who'll be deciding. I'll just send him a letter." [Miyabi]

Suddenly, Sebasu suggested something.

"How about going home instead of sending a letter? Renauph isn't that far from here, so I can send you home with my dimension magic." [Sebasu]

"Ah, now that you mention it." [Ryouma]

Ryouma can't overlook their training tomorrow either because of his promotion exam, so when he heard Sebasu's suggestion, he was inclined to agree. As they continued to talk like that, in the end, it was decided that the girls will be visiting Miyabi's family in Renauph.

"See you tomorrow." [Michelle]

"Good luck on your promotion exam." [Elia]

"Show us your B Rank guild card after we get back, alright?" [Riera]

"We'll buy you some souvenirs." [Kanan]

In front of the house in the tunnels, everyone spoke words of encouragement to Ryouma before leaving. Then after everyone was gone, Ryouma muttered to himself.

“...The promotion exam, huh? Come to think of it, how long has it been since my last exam? I got one when I registered for the first time, but the results then didn’t really matter... Anyway, I should move my body a bit before sleeping.” [Ryouma]

What people do in that peculiar time period known as “The Day Before the Exam” differs between every individual. But in Ryouma’s case, he started training high-level magic such as the magic battle technique and shadow manipulation. But of course, as the exam was tomorrow, in the end it was just light training to get his body in perfect condition.

Although whether that training could be called light for a normal person is another story altogether. After training, Ryouma was only slightly exhausted. So he took a dip in the bath first, then he retired for the day.



The Next Day

When Ryouma woke up it was already almost noon. After eating and preparing, he went to the Adventurer’s Guild to take the promotion exam. The receptionist, Meilin, told him he had to wait a bit, so they ended up chatting. Most of the adventurers had already gotten their requests in the morning, so Meilin was relatively free.

“Sorry, but it looks like your opponent for today suddenly fell sick, so he couldn’t inform the guild in advance. We’ll look for a new opponent for you within the day, so just wait a bit, alright?” [Meilin]

Hearing that, Ryouma grew anxious.

“I don’t mind, but you will find someone, right?” [Ryouma]

“We’ll there aren’t really a lot of B Rank adventurers. And if we get someone strong but has a horrible personality, they’ll get mad when they end up losing... You wouldn’t like that, would you?” [Meilin]

“Well, yeah.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma nodded as if to say, 'Obviously', while Meilin laughed.

"Anyway, there shouldn't be any problems as long as we weed out the bad bunch. But there's really just too few adventurers who are B Rank up, especially when we limit it to Gimuru. Not to mention, how short notice this is.

Actually, there's also the option of just subjugating a magical beast, but in the end, we still need to hire an adventurer B Rank up to act as an inspector. And on top of that, you'll both have to go out to look for a B Rank magical beast. So not only will it cause more work, it'll cost even more money too." [Meilin]

"Wait a moment, Meilin-san, aren't there people who would fit the bill? Like Jeff-san or Miya-san?" [Ryouma]

"Well that's true, but they're not here right now. They're working on a request somewhere." [Meilin]

"Oh." [Ryouma]

Around this time, another female receptionist who looked like new hand went up to Meilin.

"Meilin-san, can I borrow you for a bit?" [Female Receptionist]

"Sure, what is it? Ah, Ryouma-kun..." [Meilin]

"I'll wait over there. If you can't find anyone, just let me know." [Ryouma]

Meilin is still on duty after all, so there's no way she could keep chatting with Ryouma. In the meantime, Ryouma decided to kill some time by the notice board.



30 minutes later, Meilin called out to Ryouma who was still staring at the notice board.

"There sure are a lot of transport and escort jobs." [Ryouma]

"Ryouma-kun, we found someone!" [Meilin]

As soon as Ryouma heard that, he immediately replied, and Meilin brought him to the examination hall where the guild master, Wogan, and a pair of a man and a woman were.

“Sorry about that, we made you wait a bit. Are you ready?” [Wogan]

“Yes. I’ll be in your care today.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma had already equipped his armor over his special battle clothes which were made with slime thread. A blade could also be seen by his hips. Ryouma was fully ready so he greeted Wogan and the pair of man and woman, but...

“Sorry, but you’re mistaken.” [Man]

“The person you’ll be fighting isn’t us.” [Woman]

“Ryouma, those two are healers. They’re here in case either you or your partner gets injured.” [Wogan]

“Ah, so that’s how it is. Sorry about that, though I’ll still be in your care.” [Ryouma]

Because of this the atmosphere between Ryouma and the pair became cheerful, but then... Who was Ryouma’s opponent?

“Umm... could it be that I’ll be fighting you today, Guild Master?” [Ryouma]

“Nope. I’m only here to observe.” [Wogan]

“Then in that case, who---“ [Ryouma]

“It’s me.” [???

Before Ryouma could finish speaking, a voice reached him from the entrance of the examination hall. When Ryouma turned around, what greeted him was a giant of a man with an adamantite hammer over his shoulder. His pair of eyes looked at Ryouma with a ferocity like those looking at one’s prey. Smiling, he walked toward Ryouma.

“I see... He certainly is above B Rank, isn’t he?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma's opponent is none other than the S Rank adventurer, Glen.

CHAPTER 8

PROMOTION EXAM

Smiling, Glen walked over to where Ryouma was, and Ryouma greeted him.

“I’ll be in your care today, Glen-san.” [Ryouma]

“Sure, leave it to me! So it looks like we can finally fight, huh. You know, I’ve always wanted to see how strong you are.” [Glen]

“We only happened to pass by each other. I’m amazed that you actually remembered me.” [Ryouma]

“Ain’t easy to forget a guy calmly walking through the land of death. Especially, when that “guy” happens to be a kid. In fact, I would’ve actually fought you right there and there if it weren’t for my job!” [Glen]

Glen laughed as he recalled back to their first meeting. Seeing that, Ryouma again realized how much he liked to fight.

“But why is my partner Glen-san?” [Ryouma]

“I only came here to try my hand at the arena, and didn’t do any jobs, so I ended up being strapped for cash. I dropped by the guild to get a job to hunt some A Rank beast and make some money, but I ended up being dragged here instead.” [Glen]

“From the perspective of the guild though, we enjoy having strong adventurers work for us... Of course, I’m not just talking about Glen, but you too, Ryouma.” [Wogan]

While Ryouma and Glen were talking, Wogan interjected. From the guild’s perspective, Ryouma who goes to and fro the Great Forest of Shurus to gather ingredients isn’t that much different from Glen when it comes to their achievements.

“We’ll start as soon as you’re ready. If you are, you can go ahead and enter the arena.” [Wogan]

As Wogan said that, Glen happily obliged. As for Ryouma, he seemed to be thinking for a bit, but not long later, he entered the arena as well. As soon as both of them entered the arena, they took some distance from each other.

Glen started swinging his hammer. Meanwhile, Ryouma did not touch his sword, but instead took out a rod with his dimension magic. That rod reached up his shoulders from the ground, and had a golden color on both ends. Other than that, it also had a faint blue luster to it. It was a metallic rod.

“Is that mythril and orichalcum?” [Glen]

Glen guessed what materials the rod was made from as soon as he saw it. Just as he said, Ryouma’s rod was indeed made out of mythril and orichalcum. However, it was made by creating a hollow adamantite tube first, and then filling it with mythril to serve as a stuffing. On top of that, the exterior was further reinforced by coating it in mythril, and then orichalcum was furnished on both of its end, resulting in a product much more durable than something just made out of mythril. On top of that, it also has the same effects of a wand.

On top of the ingots Ryouma received from his inheritance, he also used the mythril and adamantite he mined himself to make other weapons and wands, but in terms of function and ease of use, there’s nothing better than this staff. If there’re any weak points that would be--

“Never knew you had the same taste as those old nobles...” [Glen]

“Don’t say it. Please.” [Ryouma]

Because of its golden hue and faint blue luster, the staff looks conspicuously expensive. So despite its ease of use as a weapon, Ryouma normally keeps it inside his Item Box, only bringing it out when absolutely necessary.

Ryouma decided to bring it out this time because of Glen’s hammer. While Ryouma’s sword might also be made from adamantite, making it extremely resilient and unlikely to break, the possibility for it to break under the force of an adamantite hammer

wielded by someone like Glen can't be denied. Of course, Ryouma would of course do his best to dodge, but there's no doubting that he would definitely end up crossing weapons with Glen. So in order to lessen the odds of losing his weapon during the battle, Ryouma decided to change his weapon to a staff.

"Well... as long as you're able to fight, it doesn't really matter." [Glen]

Glen didn't care much about minor details such as one's choice of weapon, so after Wogan finished explaining the rules, the signal to start was given.

"Are you both ready? I'll be the one to decide on the result of this exam, so please don't die. That goes for the both of you, alright? So don't try and fight with the intention of killing each other or something. We've also prepared two healers for the two of you. They can use advanced healing magic, so most injuries shouldn't be a problem. The battle will last until one of you admits his defeat or once I give the signal to stop. Understood? Good. Then in that case, let's start the exam! Ready!? Fight!" [Wogan]

"Let's go!" [Glen]

As soon as the signal was given, Glen bolted for Ryouma with his hammer raised. In response, Ryouma gripped his staff, tight, and took a step forward. The two weapons looked to clash.

" 'Ha!' " [Ryouma]

"Oof! Huah!" [Glen]

Although it was only a short cry it caused Glen's movements to slightly dull, allowing Ryouma to make the first strike. This is a small trick Ryouma thought of by applying the spell, 'Cursed Song'. Though only a moment, the fear and anxiety roused by the spell allowed Ryouma to take a small advantage.

But the reason he was able to take only a "small" advantage was because of Glen himself. Whenever Ryouma used it with other normal adventurers and bandit, they always ended up showing a huge opening. Just as one would expect of an S-Ranked, he wasn't someone to be taken lightly.

Moreover, Glen is a man who's overcome many bloodbaths himself. So although his movements have been dulled, he hasn't completely stopped. After Glen dodged Ryouma's staff, he immediately went on the counter attack. The fierce exchange between the two fighters resulted in opening some space between them. On Glen's face could be seen a huge smile. He truly looked like he was enjoying himself.

(...I never expected it to have much of an effect, so I just used it to take the initiative, but... It looks like I dug my own grave instead.)

Ryouma's hypothesis was correct. People who have been inflicted by Intimidate and Cursed Song normally stop in fear. But Glen is different. To him such tricks have a completely opposite effect. Of course, it goes without saying that the spell did have an effect, but the only thing it induced was that very fear that Glen himself wanted. As someone who has fought time and time again with magical beasts, there is nothing more Glen could ask for than to have a fight with someone who could instill in him a sense of dread.

Which also means to say that if Glen had instead not felt any threat from Ryouma, his appetite for battle would have probably been smothered. But with the current situation, Glen's appetite for battle couldn't have been any more whetted.



From here on Glen's attacks became fiercer. In contrast, Ryouma continued attacking calmly. Because Ryouma avoided meeting Glen's hammer with his staff, the sound of wind being cut filled the examination hall.

Ryouma focused on dodging while looking for an opening, but Glen wouldn't let up. There were some openings, but because Glen was aware of them, Ryouma couldn't make a move. If anything it looked like Glen was purposely leaving some openings to bait Ryouma, so Ryouma couldn't just rashly attack. On the other hand, because Ryouma refused to make a move and was focused on dodging, none of Glen's attacks managed to land.

Suddenly, Glen took a step back and casted magic.

“ ‘Rock Rain’ ” [Glen]

The Intermediate Earth Magic ‘Rock Rain’.

It’s a spell that creates several rocks in the air to fall onto one’s target.

Because of Glen’s ‘Rock Rain’ rocks of various sizes appeared in the air. As they fell down to the ground, clouds of dust whirled up as the sound of crashing filled the hall. But because Ryouma was able to calmly predict where the rocks would fall after inferring from the magic power, he was able to safely run away. After a few seconds, the rain of rocks finally came to a stop. But now, there were obstacles littered all over the arena.

When Ryouma saw that, his brows immediately furrowed. Meanwhile, Glen resumed his attack. His hammer was the same as before, but from time to time it would crash against a nearby rock, causing the exploding fragments to hurl toward Ryouma. Moreover, because of all the rocks, Ryouma’s movements were being hindered, making it hard for him to dodge.

With his staff and his ki-strengthened body, he’s been able to barely dodge everything so far, but at this rate, the situation will only get worse. So with that in mind, Ryouma passed through the gap between two rocks, and he casted his magic toward Glen who was chasing after him.

“ ‘Earth Needle!’ ” [Ryouma]

3 thick rock needles lined up, and flew diagonally toward the ground. Ryouma wasn’t the only one affected by the rocks, Glen’s movements were also being hindered. So with a rock on each flank, and rock needles coming in from the front, Glen had no choice but to jump back and dodge.

In that moment, Ryouma focused his ki on his legs, and he bolted off toward Glen. Glen swung his hammer again, but Ryouma jumped off of his needles and he landed on one

of the nearby rocks that blocked Glen's movements. Ryouma kicked that rock, dodged Glen's hammer, and then swung his staff.

"Tch!" [Glen]

As Glen dodged Ryouma's attacks, he realized that the battle would be much harder with Ryouma on the offense, so he swung his hammer diagonally up, and left that area with the rocks and needles.

"This is fun!" [Glen]

As he yelled that, he ran. Ryouma followed after him.

(Never expected Glen-san to actually run away.)

Ryouma chased after him while being wary of any schemes, but before he could think of anything, Glen stopped before a rock as big as an adult, and then he suddenly dropped his weapon. Ryouma immediately understood the reason behind that ridiculous move.

"Take this!!!" [Glen]

"Haa!?" [Ryouma]

Glen took the giant rock in front of him, and in a flash, he threw it at Ryouma.

Although Ryouma was still shocked by Glen's display of strength, he immediately concluded that he wouldn't be able to dodge the flying rock. So he made the decision to crush it with his staff which he imbued with the earth magic 'Crack', pulverizing the rock and destroying even the smallest fragments.

However, this was the wrong choice.

“Got ya!” [Glen]

“!!” [Ryouma]

While Ryouma was caught up with defending against the rock, Glen had already picked up his weapon and rushed toward Ryouma. Ryouma might have managed to defend against the rock, but in exchange, he left a huge opening. Glen wasn't going to let this chance pass by. He immediately bashed his hammer into Ryouma's left shoulder. Not even magic could make it in time now.

(I can't dodge.)

Unable to dodge, Ryouma moved his staff to block the path of the hammer, while reinforcing his shoulder, his arms, his staff, and his whole lower body with ki.

“Gu!” [Ryouma]

Receiving the full impact of the hammer with his body and staff hurt, but Ryouma didn't have the time to think about the pain.

(‘Magic Hand’!)

“Not good--“ [Glen]

The magic power that Ryouma released took on the form of a giant hand. Glen noticed it, but in the next moment, that hand had made a fist and buried itself into his stomach. Then under Ryouma's breath, Ryouma muttered some magic words, and Glen's giant body was blown almost five meters away.

“Rocket Punch” [Ryouma]

“!?” [Glen]

‘Magic Hand’ is the magic Ryouma created yesterday in the training with Riera and the others. Ryouma then used the spell ‘Rocket Punch’ with ‘Magic Hand’, resulting in Glen

being flicked off almost five meters away. Both these spells rely on the application of the neutral magic 'Telekinesis'.

" 'Mega Heal' ...Whew. I didn't think I'd actually end up using something I just created yesterday... Well, a man's gotta do what he's gotta do I guess." [Ryouma]

As Ryouma muttered that, he used healing magic to restore his shoulder. As he wielded his staff again, he looked toward the area Glen was blown off to. From over there could be seen Glen standing up while rubbing his stomach. He seemed impressed by the fact that Ryouma could counterattack despite the position he was in.

"That one was good. Wait a sec... didn't I just break your arm? How are you still using that?" [Glen]

"I healed it." [Ryouma]

"The heck? So you can keep on fighting even after being injured? Damn, kid, you a zombie or something?"

Hah? What are ya making that face for? It's a compliment; a compliment. You know I fought with a C Rank before, and he cried so much from the pain that he couldn't focus on casting magic." [Glen]

(Since when was being called a zombie a compliment?)

Ryouma wasn't sure what to think of Glen's "compliments", but their conversation didn't last long.

"Anyway, our battle ain't over yet, kid. Time for round two!" [Glen]

Their battle was just beginning.

CHAPTER 9

THE END OF THE PROMOTION EXAM

The boulders were crushed, the wind cried, the dust stirred, and the rocks grazed upon their skins.

Glen's hammer crushed another boulder as his hammer came swinging toward Ryouma.

"You really like to keep things interesting, huh!!!" [Ryouma]

Ryouma's magic sent Glen flying.

After their battle resumed, the training hall that was filled with boulders had once again changed shape, and was now an empty lot. But the flow of the battle hadn't change. Glen continued his fierce attack while Ryouma calmly defended as he aimed for the openings in Glen's defense.

"Take that!" [Glen]

('Magic Hand') [Ryouma]

Ryouma dodged Glen's attack. His two hands were occupied with his staff, so he used 'Magic Hand' to throw Glen on his back.

"Tch! 'Rock Bullet' !" [Glen]

But right before that, Glen jumped up in the air. Then he used his earth magic and summoned a rock toward himself. He caught that rock, then he threw it toward Ryouma.

"!?" [Ryouma]

Glen only threw the rock with his arms, but it was actually faster than if he had just used his magic. Confused by the sudden turn of events, Ryouma managed to dodge, but he inadvertently cancelled his Magic Hand, and Glen somersaulted down to the ground.

Ryouma rushed up to Glen and counterattacked, but Glen blocked him with his hammer as a shield. Then with his bigger stature and strength, he pushed Ryouma away. After recovering his posture, he rushed up to Ryouma. The battle was yet to end.

The battle between the two continued, but the situation started to change.

“Not good!?” [Ryouma]

The hammer that Glen swung with all his might took Ryouma’s staff with it, causing Ryouma to let go. The sound of a grating metallic sound resounded near the edge of the arena as the staff crashed into the wall. With this Glen had taken the upper hand, but Ryouma wasn’t going to accept his loss just because he’s lost his weapon.

As Ryouma dodged Glen’s attacks, he wrapped his already ki-reinforced body with magic power. Then as a slight opening appeared, he thrust his palm toward Glen and used ‘Fire Ball’.

“!” [Glen]

Glen managed to barely dodge the palm thrust, but he couldn’t dodge the fireball that shot out of Ryouma’s palm. Because of that he couldn’t get out uninjured, and Ryouma pressed on.

As ‘Fireball’ shot out from Ryouma’s palm, ‘Earth Needle’ shot off from the ground as he sent a kick flying toward Glen. Then right before Ryouma regained his footing from the kick, he casted ‘Wind Cutter’. When he got back his footing, he immediately rushed toward Glen again and thrusted out his palms. None of the magic he used were above elementary level, but because they were casted alongside his Taijutsu, and because of

how fast and close he casted them, they were quite effective.

“That’s an odd way of fighting, but... That’s exactly what makes it amusing!” [Glen]

Glen was forced to either dodge or parry every single one of Ryouma’s attacks with his hands or his hammer. It was clear that he wasn’t in an easy position, but despite that, Glen’s expression didn’t change. In fact, he was even laughing as if he was having the time of his life, not an ounce of distress could be seen on him. Only the joy of fighting could be seen on his face.

(It’s probably because he’s like this that he’s so strong.)

Although Glen was born with a strong body, he wasn’t always an S Rank. He suffered plenty of losses too. But because of how much he loved fighting, his heart never broke regardless of who he fought or how big the gap was in their strength. It’s also because of his love for fighting that he was able to endure many situations he would’ve otherwise not. So Ryouma’s hunch was indeed correct.



As Glen survived Ryouma’s onslaught of magic, he went behind Ryouma, and he swung his hammer. Ryouma dodged to the right, but Glen’s hammer followed Ryouma. In response, Ryouma focused his magic power behind him and he casted the electric-type magic, ‘Stun Arrow’.

Right before he could cast his magic, however, Glen had already retreated, leaving the ‘Stun Arrow’ without a target to hit. Not letting himself be disadvantaged, Ryouma took the opportunity to use his dimension magic to take back his staff.

A dent could be seen on his staff after having been sent flying, but it could still be used as a weapon. Ryouma gripped it tight as he met Glen once more.

(Since he could dodge my magic even at point-blank, he might also be able to sense magic. Should I use an area-of-effect spell then? I did get my staff back, so...)

“Ice Spear” [Ryouma]

Using ice-elemental magic power, Ryouma clad the edge of his staff and transformed it into a blade of ice, then he executed a triple thrust. That ever changing staff of his could thrust, sweep, and even bash.

“So it’s a spear this time!” [Glen]

(You might be stronger, but I’m faster!) [Ryouma]

Disoriented, Ryouma shot a Wind Cutter spell at Glen’s feet as he thrust his spear. Then immediately after, he casted his original earth magic, and distanced himself from Glen.

“Earth Fang” [Ryouma]

In the next instant, the area 3 meters around Glen started shooting out countless earth needles. Unfortunately, barley any of them hit. Seeing that, anyone would think that Ryouma failed, but Glen felt something was off, so he swung his hammer, and destroyed the surrounding needles.

“Earth Bite” [Ryouma]

At Ryouma’s voice, the surrounding ground bulged and tried to bite Glen. It was as if the earth with needles sticking out of it was trying to swallow his entire being. In response, Glen bashed his hammer against the ground.

Earth and sand blew up as his hammer descended, and rocks of all sizes shot all over the arena. But this time, Ryouma didn’t defend. Instead, he attacked. With his ki protecting his body, Ryouma rushed through the earth and sand with his wind magic, and he pierced his staff into Glen’s stomach.

That blow contained in it a force strong enough to make any man faint, but right before it could bury itself into Glen, it was stopped.

“---!!” [Ryouma]

What stopped the staff was the handle of Glen’s hammer. Apparently, Glen had reflexively moved his hammer, allowing him to stop Ryouma’s attack in the nick of time.

To think the thrust of a staff could actually be stopped with something as thin as the handle of a hammer, as expected of an S Class. If this were a public duel, shouts of praises would surely have filled the hall.

But at that moment, what shouted was not the voice of praise, but of the guild master.

“That’s enough! Drop your weapons!” [Wogan]

As Wogan’s voice resounded, so did the signal to end the match. As Ryouma sheathed his weapons, he took a deep breath. The match now over, Glen laughed and went over to talk to Ryouma.

“You really are strong! Especially that last one. Man that gave me the chills. It’s been a while since I’ve had this much fun, if you’re up for it, we can still continue...” [Glen]

“No, that’s enough. Also, if this keeps up, the bill for the repairs is gonna be ridiculous.” [Wogan]

Wogan informed the two with his hand on his forehead, his head seemingly in pain. When Ryouma and Glen heard that, they looked around them, and what they saw was a cracked, uneven land that had been lifted up. Countless traces of the battle could also be seen on the door and the walls around the area. The whole place was now a desolate land completely unlike that of its earlier appearance.

(And naturally, the people responsible for this are none other than me and Glen, with my magic and those rocks and that hammer of his.)

“And so, because of various reasons, the battle can no longer continue. This duel is over.” [Wogan]

Wogan firmly reiterated that, and Glen had no choice but to shrug his shoulders, saying, “I guess it can’t be helped then.”

“Thank you for today, Glen-san” [Ryouma]

“Don’t sweat it. It’s been a while since I got to fight this much. That aside, what about the results?” [Glen]

Glen and Ryouma both looked toward Wogan. In response, Wogan spoke in a tone that seemed to say, “Don’t ask the obvious.”

“Ryouma’s strong enough, so of course he’ll be promoted to B Rank. Besides, if I don’t pass him here, people are going to start questioning me.

Anyway, you’ve both suffered some wounds, so go ahead and get yourselves healed. I’ll get the papers done in the meantime.

Ryouma, you can go home if you want, but make sure you get your B Rank guild card from the receptionist first.” [Wogan]

“I understand, Wogan-san. Thank you very much!” [Ryouma]

As Wogan said that, he took Ryouma’s guild card, and went back into the guild ahead of everyone.

Meanwhile, Ryouma and Glen received treatment for their wounds and bruises. Suddenly, Glen asked Ryouma his plans for the day.

“Oi, Ryouma, you free today?” [Glen]

“I don’t have anything in particular planned, so yes.” [Ryouma]

As Ryouma replied, Glen heartily laughed.

“Then let’s drink! We’ll toast to your promotion!” [Glen]

“I-Isn’t it a bit too early for that?” [Ryouma]

“Who cares! Besides, once we start drinking, it’ll be dark before you know it! You two coming along?” [Glen]

Glen started gradually putting together a drinking party by himself, even dragging with him the two healers. Ryouma was a bit confused by the sudden turn of events, but in the end, he happily accepted Glen’s invitation. However...

“Let’s drink! Let’s drink! All you bastards who want to drink come! We’re celebrating this guy’s promotion, so all drinks are on me!!” [Glen]

When Glen entered the guild, he started calling out to the adventurers. Seeing that, Ryouma couldn’t help himself but ask.

“Glen-san, weren’t you having financial difficulties?” [Ryouma]

“What? It’s not like I’m gonna turn into a beggar or anything’. I can easily just go hunt some magical beast, so the store will just put it on my tab. This celebration is for you, you know. Let’s make a bang!

For that we’ll need people. Lots and lots of people! Anyway, don’t sweat the details, and just get that card of yours.” [Glen]

So Ryouma went to the receptionist to get his B Rank guild card. When he got back there were almost 20 adventurers in their party.

“Glen-san, can we come too?” [Adventurer 1]

“Yeah! Don’t mind the money, I’ll pay it all!” [Glen]

“This is turning into a banquet!” [Ryouma]

“Perfect! Oh, hey, you’re back. Oi, you lot, since our celebrant is back, let’s go out and

drink ourselves drunk!!” [Glen]

“Yeah!!” [Adventurers]

Surrounded by a crowd of adventurers way bigger than he expected, Ryouma followed along completely dumbstruck as Glen led the crowd to the pub, where they all celebrated Ryouma’s promotion. Many people congratulated Ryouma, but they also talked about other things.

From what Ryouma gathers, apparently, it isn’t strange at all for Glen to take adventurers or arena participants out to drink. To add to that Glen also has a huge appetite, and he always pays whenever he goes out with lower ranked adventurers.

With that Ryouma finally understood why Glen was having money problems. And immediately after, as if to further prove his suspicions, the great feast started.

Incidentally, when the feast began, people started trying to out drink each other. So since Ryouma was already here, he figured he might as well join. Because of this Ryouma secretly gained a reputation of being a strong drinker of the likes of Glen.

CHAPTER 10

IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

The next day.

“...Is it morning... I gotta... get up.” [Ryouma]

As I rubbed my eyes, I got off the bed. It's been a while since I drank so much, but thanks to Tekun's divine protection, I don't feel sick at all. Actually, I've never had a hangover since coming to this world.

“Let's do our best today too!” [Ryouma]

As I fired myself up, a voice suddenly echoed within my mind. This is... from a god!

“Ryouma, can you hear my voice?” [Gayn]

The owner of the voice, was this world's God of Creation, Gayn. Because of all the banquets we've been having, my Oracle skill has been levelling up a lot. Before I knew it, I've become able to talk with them without having to go to the church. So, whenever Gayn and the others want to talk to me, I use the Oracle skill. We don't really talk about anything else outside of the banquets though... Is he calling about that this time too?

“Yup, loud and clear. It's been a while since you last contacted me though. Is everything alright, Gayn?” [Ryouma]

“But of course, we're all doing splendidly. We just had a difficult job, and it was quite taxing. Everyone's exhausted.” [Gayn]

His voice is cheerful, but there're clearly traces of fatigue.

“If you're all finished with your work, how about I cook you guys something again?”

[Ryouma]

“We were actually hoping you would. Is that alright?” [Gayn]

“Of course, I’ll go in the evening after preparing everything.” [Ryouma]

“I’ll be looking forward to it then. See you later night.” [Ryouma]

After those last words resounded in my head, everything went silent again.

Incidentally, although I have to go to a church to enter the divine realm, there’s a church east of the mines. It’s built like those famous historical churches that I saw in my textbooks back in my previous world. It’s really amazing. In fact, Gayn and the others thinks so too. It’s a lot closer than the church in town, so I can take my time.



While I was thinking about what to cook, Elia and the others came.

Didn’t they go to Renauph? Are they back already? Miyabi’s family is there, so they should’ve enjoyed themselves more...

I greeted them at the entrance of the house, talked a bit, then I invited them in. Apparently, it was restless back in Miyabi’s house, so they couldn’t get much rest. In the end, they decided to just go back after an overnight stay.

“That aside, we bought you some souvenirs.” [Miyabi]

Oh, right. They did mention about buying me some.

“Thanks.” [Ryouma]

As I said that, Miyabi and Sebasu-san glanced at each other. Then Sebasu-san took out a bag as big as a watermelon from his Item Box. And then, as if Miyabi was waiting for me to ask, she answered.

“This is a Milequilis Fruit.” [Miyabi]

Milequilis... I’ve never seen nor eaten one, but I have heard of it. If I recall correctly, this fruit is...

“Is this the famed Milequilis Fruit that’s delicious but hard to cultivate and quick to spoil?” [Ryouma]

Miyabi nodded, then she took out a fruit from the bag. The fruit was as rough as a pineapple and as big as a basketball. It feels hard, and it seems to be hollowed in just one spot. This fruit grows from trees, so this hollow spot is probably where the calyx used to be.

“Thanks. I like it.” [Ryouma]

Since it spoils fast, I should probably go ahead and use the light magic ‘Preservation’... Good. It’s too much to eat by myself, so I guess I’ll cut it for lunch, and serve it as dessert.

As I was thinking that, Miyabi spoke.

“There’s still more, ya know! Next up--“ [Miyabi]

There’s more?

“This one’s from my dad.” [Miyabi]

As Miyabi said that, this time she took out a rectangular wooden box that looked heavy. It was stuffed full of meguribushi.

“Oh, so this is a part of the payment for the production of the mizuame.” [Ryouma]

“Ya did say that you wouldn’t mind us making and using them in the store, so dad

wants me to tell you that we'll be stocking up on 'em to study. We're looking forward to work with the Saionji Firm from here on." [Miyabi]

"Not at all. It's my pleasure." [Ryouma]

Being able to get meguribushi for so little is so awesome! But while I received the box of meguribushi, the souvenirs weren't done just yet. Elia and the others still had a mountain more to give me. Most of them were food and imported clothes though. I'm not that particular about my clothes, but these clothes were imported from the dragonewt village, and looked like nagajuban, kinagashi and samue. These're seriously some good stuff.

When I told the girls that I liked their presents, their faces blossomed into smiles. Apparently, they had a hard time deciding what to buy in just one day.

When you think about it, Renauph is close enough to teleport too, so these aren't really souvenirs, but things that I could enjoy or use. I should happily wear these.



After I received all of their souvenirs, Elia and the others resumed their training in full spirits. Then after checking up on their training, I went to prepare lunch.

"Ryouma-san, aren't you making too much?" [Elia]

"I'm going to be meeting up with some acquaintances later evening, so there's quite a bit." [Ryouma]

Elia's curiosity was piqued seeing all of the food, but she didn't pursue the matter any further, and she asked about my promotion exam instead. Whew, good thing she didn't ask. If she went "Acquaintance? From where? And who?" I'd be really troubled.

After eating, we had the Milequilis for dessert. I asked Sebasu-san how to cut it.

"First cut it in half, then hollow out the seeds inside. After that, just cut it, and distribute." [Sebasu]

...Is what he said. I guess it's no different from cutting melon.

Following Sebasu's advice, I reinforced my kitchen knife with ki, then I effortlessly cut the Milequilis in two, causing white liquid to gush out. At that, an intoxicating sweet smell suddenly filled the room. It probably seeped outside too. Can a fruit really emit this sort of fragrance?

"This fragrance is proof that it's ready to eat. When it's still too raw or too ripe, the fruit won't emit this smell." [Sebasu]

As I listened to Sebasu-san's explanation, I removed the crescent-moon-shaped seeds from the two halves, then I cut them into portions. After that, Sebasu-san distributed them across different plates.

"Well then, it's time to serve." [Sebasu]

I took a bite... In that instant, the fragrant earlier ago spread within my mouth, and the fruit's juices overflowed. I don't really get the taste, but it's like a mixture of various fruit juices.

As I ate, everyone else started eating. It was delicious, and everyone ate with relish. Apparently, the Milequilis Fruit is rare even amongst nobles, so everyone happily ate.



After eating, the training in the afternoon was cancelled, and the girls helped me prepare the food for the banquet later evening instead. They said it was to improve their cooking, but either way, it's a huge help for me.

I put the food we made into a magic box, then I stored it in my Item Box. After Elia and the others went home, I went to the church East of my house.

Stone columns stood in a row, and in between was a large slab of rock for a wall. As

soon as I passed through the entrance of the temple, I found myself in the chapel. This whole place could accommodate about 200 people, but aside from me, barely anyone ever comes here. Directly opposite the entrance could be seen an altar and a pedestal, as well as some statues shaped after the gods lined up.



The moment I stood in front of the altar, that familiar light immediately shone, and I closed my eyes. It seems they've been waiting. When the light ceased, I opened my eyes, and I found myself standing in that white space. The room wasn't empty. There was a table and some chairs. And more importantly, there were plenty of familiar faces.

"We've been waiting, Ryouma! Take out those snacks!" [Tekun]

"Can't you wait for a bit?" [Fer Noevir]

As soon as I appeared in the room, Tekun immediately asked for the snacks, leading him to meet Fel Noevir's rebuke.

All the gods I know are present. Even the one who's usually absent, Fer Noevir, is here. As for why he's usually absent, it might be because he's bad at rowdy stuff like this.

"Long time no see~" [Kufo]

"Sorry for always troubling you." [Gayn]

"Gayn, Kufo, it's been a while. Everyone seems to be here today." [Ryouma]

"We just finished an important job, after all. Everyone wants to relax." [Rurutia]

Speaking of important jobs... there's only one thing that comes to mind...

"Did you figure it out?" [Meltrize]

"The Demon King's Fragments?" [Ryouma]

"Precisely." [Meltrize]

The goddess of sleep and death, Meltrize, spoke. She's always somewhere near every time I notice her presence... Well, I've gotten used to it already though. That aside, they were apparently still looking for them. I've heard them finding those fragments so many times, so I thought they found them all already.

"This time, we found three." [Grimp]

"That many?" [Ryouma]

"Two were at the bottom of the sea. One was underground. There are more elsewhere too. He sure hid them well." [Grimp]

"That guy's body burst and scattered a lot when we were fighting him. Shouldn't have let him. That just gave him a chance to hide himself." [Kirilel]

This time the God of Farming, Grimp, and the God of War, Kirilel, spoke. Erm, wait... So, you guys made the demon king blow up several times? I'm impressed he managed to run away... If a human were in his shoes, he would've died long ago.

Apparently, the demon king's power seems to be hidden. But on top of that, because they're just fragments, their power is weak. And with all the magic power all over the world, it's like looking for a needle in a haystack. As a result, they end up taking a lot of effort just to find one to destroy.

"That's not all. The power to extinguish a fragment is really dangerous, so the surrounding area ends up being destroyed. So, we have to keep it in check to ensure that we do as little damage to the ecosystem as possible. We also have to monitor the area afterwards." [Kirilel]

"The point is that it's really exhausting, so it makes us want to drink." [Grimp]

"Makes sense... Here, more snacks." [Ryouma]

"Thanks." [Grimp]

This time the Goddess of Land, Willieris, changed the topic, and Kufo joined in.

"That's enough complaining, you guys." [Willieris]

"Right, right. By the way, Ryouma, what have you been up to lately? We didn't have the

time to watch recently, so we're a bit late on the happenings." [Kufo]

The gods all looked at me as I recounted my time in the magic beast tournament and with Elia's group. The topic this time was a lot more cheerful.

"Oh? So, you're teaching those girls now?" [Willieris]

"Yes, everyone's doing really well. For example--" [Ryouma]

I happily talked about my time alone and with the girls' training. I even had a glass in one hand and snack in the other as I talked, but there's a limit to how long I can stay here.

"It's almost time." [Meltrize]

"Already?" [Grimp]

"Well, let's continue this next time. I think you'll have more stories to tell us then."
[Kirilel]

"I look forward to it." [Tekun]

Meltrize reminded us of the time, so we started to end the banquet. After we finished, the light shone again. Suddenly, however, Willieris handed a map to me.

"Ryouma-kun, you're already free from the last fragment, right?" [Willieris]

This is a map of Troll Canyon... That's the canyon where the Execution Grounds is located, the place where I found the fragment. On the map, there's a point that shows where I can excavate magic jewels.

Ever since I took the demon king's fragment from the canyon, all the magic power that was being sucked by it spilled into the surroundings, resulting in an explosive increase of undead-type magical beast. Magic jewels have also become a lot more common. With this map, I'm guaranteed to find a lot of jewels.

It's a map from the Goddess of Land herself after all. Naturally, the number of magic jewels you could find with it would be way over the top as compensation for some food. I didn't really know what else to say, so I just gratefully accepted it.

"Thank you very much. I'll gather some when I go out to feed the grave slimes."
[Ryouma]

"Don't mind it. We'll ask you to prepare a banquet for us again, so set those aside for the food costs then." [Willieris]

"Sure. Then, until next time." [Ryouma]

At this moment, my consciousness came back to the real world.

CHAPTER 11

ONE MONTH LATER

The days passed and the girls' training never ceased just as the people hustled about their daily lives. Until finally, a month passed. Countless researchers dropped by during the time, pestering us to no end about the slime research.

Fortunately, Director Paul was able to handle them. There were some pushy ones, sure. But Paul says they're still way easier than his old superiors back at his old lab. I don't know whether he enjoyed his time there or not, but he certainly learned a lot.

Oh, speaking of which, it's actually been awhile since I last showed my face at the lab. But then again, I was never really one to show my face much because of my adventurer work. And they would just send me a letter whenever there's a problem, so I guess it's not really anything new. I would just end up drowned in proposals if I show my face anyway, so I guess it's best that I keep my distance for now.

Recently, more and more people have been wanting to work at the lab. Apparently, they caught wind of our lab's favorable accommodation from the employees when they ate together during their visit.

We were actually already expecting people to apply since we knew the slime research would inevitably lead to people getting laid off, and have already made preparations, but the turnout was much more than what we could've expected. Hiring is a delicate process. We can't just carelessly hire people, we also have to watch out for corporate spies. Because of that, applicants have to work at the laundromat first, where they're monitored for any unusual behavior. After which, they are then ran through some further background checks.

In the process, some people end up just working in the laundromat instead, being fully content there, and no longer pushing to apply for the lab. Regardless, the sudden influx of new workers resulted in us abruptly opening a new branch.



The girls' training is going splendidly too. They're getting better and better by the day.

Elia can now consistently use the advanced fire magic 'Fire Storm', and she's also learned a plethora of other fire and ice spells. She's particularly skilled at 'Flame Carpet'. She's also gotten much better at Magic Manipulation.

Miyabi also specializes at fire magic, but she's also able to handle poison magic. She's been training her advanced spells along with my originals for both, but it seems she's more interested in poison than fire. Well, she is going to be a merchant, so I guess it's not really surprising that she'd favor something more practical. If we have time, I'd like to teach her 'Antidote'.

Kanan's reactions have improved a lot. She's now much better at dodging, and her attacks are a lot heavier compared to before. Sometimes when she has the time, she also teaches me how to make accessories.

Riera's also doing well, Usually, she's either sparring with Kanan against me or against the slimes. And I don't mean with just one kind of weapon, but every kind from swords to spears, to staves, to daggers, and even hand-to-hand combat. Her improvement is really amazing. Especially when it comes to gauging distances and her defense. I guess having her fight against a gloop of slimes, and against my underhanded tricks really polished her defense. We should probably start some live combat soon... Well, I'll talk to Sebasu about it.

As for Michelle, her growth's the most varied of the lot. She's been studying so many things after all, like Alchemy, for example.

Apparently, she's had her suspicions about my identity as an Alchemist for a long time now, but just didn't know how to bring it up due to the nature of the subject. So, when I made a passing remark about how I could use Alchemy, she jumped at me like a hungry shark.

I don't know about other alchemists, but the only reason I keep quiet is to keep away

from strange looks. So, when it comes to people who don't mind or people I can trust, I don't mind showing off one bit. Besides, Serge-san, Granny Gri, and the members of the Jamil family already know about it.

In any case, the point is Michelle ended up studying Alchemy, among other things... Not that there was much to teach or anything. Aside from the magic formation and its effects, the only other things I could teach were the chemical elements from my previous life, and the basic precautions one should take. Michelle had a lot of questions after the lesson, but I was able to fool her by saying, "What I've taught you are the basics of Alchemy. From here on out, you should look for the answers yourself."

Michelle also often converses with me regarding my original magic. In fact, even now...

"Picking up from last time, Ryouma, I think you're needlessly overcomplicating your magic. For example, 'Dig Tornado' uses the elements: Earth, Wind, and Water. That's three elements, you know? There's not many people who could cast that. Considering what you're trying to achieve with the spell, don't you think just earth and wind is enough?" [Michelle]

"Water is needed to keep the dust under control when digging." [Ryouma]

"If it's just about managing the dust, then isn't having another water magician use water magic to spread water enough?" [Michelle]

"It's not enough, and if you combine the spell with 'Hardening'---"

'Dig Tornado' is one of the construction magic I used in the tunnels. When casted, it gives off the image of water and rain swirling together to shave boulders and rocks to create a valley. With the earth magic 'Break Rock' it's a magic made specifically to dig. Things get quite dusty in the process, so the water element is needed to keep them down.

I've been coming up with new magic to accomplish my tasks more efficiently, and one of the spells I came up with was exactly this 'Dig Tornado'. With this I can efficiently dig holes, and even shallow ones without dirtying myself. When you add 'Hardening' on top of all that, the walls of the dug hole can even be strengthened at the same time. As a result, it's efficiency is no less than that of tunnel boring machines.

But because it's a three-element spell, most magicians won't be able to cast it. Which is why Michelle's been wondering whether or not there's a way to simplify it into a two-element spell.

It's a difference in priorities. Well, we both understand where the other is coming from, so...

"Why don't you two have some tea first?" [Elia]

"Ah, t-thank you." [Michelle]

"Being eager is good and all, but it's already afternoon, you know?" [Elia]

"I know. Anyway, as I was saying, Ryouma---" [Michelle]

"Sigh... I wonder if she really understands... Then again, it's just as usual." [Elia]

We tend to lose track of time when talking like this, so there've been times when we were scolded by Elia and the others. I wonder why she came this time? Was it just to bring the tea? Or is she perhaps trying to remind us not to forget lunch? Well, whatever.

As I was thinking to myself, I saw Elia off. Speaking of which, they just randomly helped me whenever I cooked before, but recently, they've put together a proper schedule for cooking duty.

After seeing Elia off and a short moment of pondering, I went back to my conversation with Michelle.

CHAPTER 12

After lunch.

After eating, I consulted with Sebasu about what I was thinking about a while ago.

“I see, live combat training... It’s certainly a good way to see their actual strength, but the bigger question is who they’ll be fighting against.” [Sebasu]

“The magical beasts around this area are really weak... More and more people have also been frequenting the area to hunt, so I think we’ll have to first find a good hunting sp-- Huh?” [Ryouma]

It seems we have a visitor.

Elia and the others noticed that we’ve stopped talking.

“What’s the matter?” [Elia]

“Someone came. It’s probably Rheinbach-sama.” [Ryouma]

“Grandfather?” [Elia]

“It could be anyone, I mean the guy didn’t even make an eek... Wait a moment, how did you know someone came?” [Riera]

Simple, because the slimes I’m contracted to contacted me. And by “contact”, I mean they told me someone came. That’s about the most we can communicate with each other. But while it could certainly be anyone, considering there are flying beasts at the airpad – according to the slimes there – then it’s probably Rheinbach-sama.

The airpad is fully functional with the tower and flags for communicating, but as far as I know, only Rheinbach-sama can use those.

“There’s an area here in the mines rarely frequented by people where tree slimes live.

They can't move, but I can communicate with them like with the other slimes, so I've ordered them ahead of time to inform me when someone comes.

Also, because they can't move and look no different from other normal trees, no one will notice them. Other than the tree slimes, there're also the stone slimes that look like stones, and the weed slimes that hide in the surrounding greeneries." [Ryouma]

The tree and stone slimes are completely indistinguishable from normal trees and stones. And the weed slimes aren't just useful for watching the house, but also for camouflage. After I turn one into a big variant, I can have it wrap itself around me to act as a Ghillie suit. I can also order it to eat the weeds in the fields, effectively removing them for me. I'll need to be careful though, or I'll find myself growing lots of weeds. But aside from that, the weed slime is a really useful slime.

"A slime again? Ryouma-kun, just how many slimes are you raising?" [Kanan]

"It's cause I also end up raising the slimes that are hard to raise from the lab. They research them first, then when they're done, I take them back home with me. The tree slimes, the stone slimes, and the weed slimes, are examples of that."

I mentally counted the slimes I have with me.

"Most of it are made up of the scavenger slimes and the grave slimes, but it's currently about 50,000 slimes." [Ryouma]

"I'm impressed you were actually able to contract that many." [Elia]

Elia muttered to herself in a fed-up tone.

Well, it is a bit much, I suppose.

"And just so you know, me being able to tame this many magical beasts is limited just with slimes." [Ryouma]

Although it barely even mattered at this point, I followed up with that anyway, and

then we headed for the airpad. When we got there, waiting for us was Rheinbach-sama's Ignis Dragon, as well as the person himself.

Hmm? I can sense someone else in here... But because of the Ignis Dragon, I can't see him... Is it another butler?

As I was thinking that to myself, Elia approached Rheinbach-sama.

"Grandfather!" [Elia]

"Oh, if it isn't Elia, it's been a while, hasn't it? I heard you've been practicing at Ryouma-kun's place. How is it?" [Rheinbach]

"It's been going splendidly, Grandfather. I can use a lot more spells now including Firestorm." [Elia]

"I see, I see. Ryouma-kun, thank you for taking of my granddaughter. And sorry for the sudden visit." [Rheinbach]

"Not at all, you're welcome anytime, Rheinbach-sama. But why all of the sudden? Normally, you'd contact me first..." [Ryouma]

At that moment, a certain familiar female voice reached my ears.

"Rheinbach-chan had nowhere to go." [???

When I turned toward the source of that voice, two familiar faces appeared by the shadow of the Ignis Drago. They were none other than the royal court magician, Remiri-san, and the former knight-commander, Shiva-san.

"Long time no see~ Ryouma-chan, Elia-chan." [Remiri]

"Remiri-oneesama!" [Elia]

Elia's shocked too... Wait, does she know Remiri-san? Oh, come to think of it, I do recall hearing something about that before... Or rather, it seems Remiri-san is having her call her 'onee-san' too. She's given up on me ever calling her that though.

“Remiri-neesan, Shiva-san, it’s been a while. Are you doing well?” [Elia]

“Of course, I take care of my health, and any injuries heal in no time at all.” [Shiva]

“We’re having the time of our lives adventuring all over.” [Remiri]

Shiva-san became an adventurer after our time in the Town of Departed Spirits. He knew he was still plenty strong despite his age, but he couldn’t go back to being a knight anymore as he’s already once retired from being a knight-commander. So, he became an adventurer instead.

Well, actually, he was asked if he wants to come back, but since he wanted to fight in the frontlines, he turned them down. Besides, if he were to go back there and do the same work he did before, he might end up depressed again...

So, he and Remiri-san became adventurers... Or wait, actually, Remiri-san was an adventurer to begin with. Only, she stopped being one after becoming a royal court magician, so in her case, it’s more of a reinstatement than a new job. In any case, because of their history and strength, they were both made S Ranks. And they spend their time travelling and adventuring all over the world.

To be more specific, they’re travelling around the world while lending a helping hand to those in need. I’ve also coincidentally met them several times.



After we went inside and talked, I found out that the Jamil Family has been very busy because of the tamer guild incident with Matthew.

“It’s because I reacted fast.” [Rheinbach]

It seems he’s had his eye on them for a while now due to their recent behavior. So, as soon as Matthew was apprehended, they went straight to the tamer guild. Apparently, they were already warned that if something were to happen again, they would be investigated even by force. Of course, that was never mentioned officially, so I never

knew about it.

And apparently, because of how urgent the situation is now, Rheinbach-sama had to ride his dragon to deliver the order and report of the current head, Reinhart-san, as soon as possible.

Seeing as how Reinhart-san has his hands full dealing with the aftermath, it would seem that Rheinbach-sama has completely passed the baton, and is now a full retiree. Shiva-san and Remiri-san went to visit him. And Rheinbach-sama figured that they should go out.

“Going out is great and all, but there’s just nowhere to go. So, I thought I’d drop by your place, and take a look at my granddaughter.” [Rheinbach]

“I see. As I said before, you’re welcome anytime. If you’d like, please see for yourselves just how much Elia’s grown.” [Ryouma]

In other words, it’s a parent observation day. Sebasu-san’s always here, so he doesn’t count, but... With Rheinbach-sama, I’m sure she’ll feel a bit more nervous.

Speaking of which, while we were talking like this, 4 of the girls could be seen visibly jittering. Riera was especially nervous. In fact, she was so nervous, she stood attention and stammered when Shiva-san called her.

Then after Shiva-san heard her last name, it turned out that he’s apparently familiar with her father and her 2 siblings. He praised them and encouraged Riera, and she cried tears of joy.

Then after seeing the girls’ progress, everyone including Shiva-san and Remiri-san, were impressed. And they decided to teach the girls too. Remiri-san taught the magic group, while Shiva-san went to teach the sword group. That fired the girls up even more.

I know it’s for their sake, but... I should go make sure they don’t push themselves too much. Especially, Riera, as she’s way too fired up.



After I discussed my plans for live combat training with the three others who arrived today, we decided to hold it in Trail Canyon. Zombies are magical beasts in the shape of humans, so with them as their partners, they'll be able to practice both anti-personnel and anti-beast fighting styles. And with the help of my grave slimes, finding enemies will be a cinch. The whole trip will be a lot safer too.

Well, with that, I found myself a great opportunity to find some feeds for the grave slime and to pick up the gods' compensation for all the food. Gonna need to do a lot of preparations though. Things are about to get busy again.

CHAPTER 13

The Next Day.

After deciding that the girls' live combat practice would be against the undead, I started making preparations for our trip to Trail Canyon. Because of that I've been making medicine since this morning but because there were so many, I still haven't finished yet despite already being past afternoon.

"Rai, I'm filling up the next batch." [Ryouma]

"Kyuhon." [Rai]

In front of me was a giant saucer on top of which was a giant mortar, and on that mortar's side was a metal rod connected to Rai.

I'm standing on the crane situated above that. A simple crane looks exactly like the planks seen in movies that pirates use to push people out of the ship. Anyway, I took a pot full of cut and dried centipedes, and threw it into the mortar. Rai started grinding that down, and I went to prepare the next batch.

The sound of grinding and knife chopping filled the room. Their sounds rang together at a steady pace. Gradually, the knife slowed down, until eventually, it finally stopped. A monotonous job, but it's not bad.

It was then that Riera, Kanan, and Shiva-san came.

"Ryouma-dono, we got that thing you asked us." [Riera]

"We've already brought it to the lab." [Kanan]

"Thank you." [Ryouma]

The girls said they'd help out during their spare time, so I asked them to pick out some

stuff for me.

More specifically, I asked them to gather the moss and the mold of the moss slimes and the mold slimes growing in a room in the tunnels. They like places that are dark and damp, so I'm raising them there where it's dark and has plenty of magic power. In exchange, they can grow me lots of blue molds and slimy luminous moss.

Once I finish filling five barrels of pulverized centipede, I'll go work with those. These centipedes are big and hard, and even small ones would take an adult some time, so it's going to take a while.



It wasn't until it was almost evening when I finished pulverizing the centipedes. Before taking the barrels of powdered centipede, I thanked Rai by feeding him some hay and branch from the tree slimes, then I went to the lab.

"I should... start with the easier one first." [Ryouma]

I picked out the barrels full of blue mold from the barrels at the corner of the room, and used Alchemy to separate it into its components, and produce penicillin.

Penicillin coming from blue mold is common sense back in my previous world. I used Alchemy again, and--

"It's done! All the penicillin I need, and I barely broke a sweat." [Ryouma]

Normally, it'd take a lot more knowledge and work to make one, but with Alchemy, everything becomes so much easier. Although, finding the right mold took a while since they all look similar.

Oh, don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining or anything. In fact, easy work is great since it's convenient, but the God of Magic, Fer Noevir, doesn't seem to like Alchemy. I think it's because Gayn just randomly made it up. And with him being a serious God

compared to Gayn and the others, the rushed job probably rubbed him the wrong way.

We're not very close, but he is a god, and he's never really said anything unreasonable. He never told me not to use Alchemy or warned me about it.

Our relationship? I guess it's of kind like a boss and his employee? Oh, but of course, he's not as cold as the bosses back in my previous life.



As I was thinking that to myself, I finished making the penicillin. And then I used that penicillin to make all sorts of ointments from ones that stop bleeding to ones that treat burns, and even shallow wounds like scratches and grazes. I always bring these with me whenever I go to the Trail Canyon.

They're necessary especially since the undead at the canyon have started picking up the weapons left by other adventurers, and because they can't maintain their weapons, their weapons are all rusted and covered in mud, making catching tetanus highly probable.

Anyway, I'll just seal the remaining penicillin, and store it somewhere cold for when I make more ointments.

"Now, where's that slimy luminous moss---Hmm?" [Ryouma]

As I was just about to get to work on the next one, Michelle, Shiva-san, and Remiri-san entered the lab.

"Ryouma-kun, is there anything we can help with?" [Michelle]

"Training's over for the day, so let us help out." [Kanan]

Oh, I guess the other ones are making supper then.

“You came at a good time. Crush these chopped mosses until they’re all syrupy.”
[Ryouma]

They won’t be using the giant mortar for this, and will instead be using a simple mortar and pestle. I take one for every person, and they start crushing moss. Meanwhile, I grab my cauldron, and start the fire.

While working, Shiva-san asked me what kind of medicine I was making.

“I’m making potions of all sorts from antidotes to ones that recover health. Also, because of this moss’ special trait of storing mana from the air to glow, the resulting potions will last longer than normal.” [Ryouma]

It’s like a preservative for potions.

When Shiva-san heard that, he asked.

“Does it matter that the moss stores mana? I’ve also used a lot of potions back in my days, but I’ve never paid much attention to the ingredients.” [Shiva]

It’s outside of his specialty, so it can’t be helped.

Medicine in this world is divided into three categories: Medicine, Magic Medicine, and Potion.

Medicine is medicine, its effects are solely dependent on the combination of ingredients, and has nothing to do with magic.

Magic medicine is similar but uses ingredients brimming with magic power to create various effects.

Potion is actually a kind of magic medicine, but it’s only the ones that have instant

effect that are truly known as potions.

In a sense, a potion is really just healing magic that utilizes the magic power of its ingredients. Which is why its effects wane as time passes, until eventually, it becomes completely useless.

In other words, it has an expiry date.

“So, adding the liquid of the moss to the formula will give the potions a longer expiry date.” [Ryouma]

“So, that’s how it is.” [Shiva]

Around this time, the water started boiling. So, I gathered the liquid moss, and added it into the cauldron. There’re some slimy parts, but those’ll coagulate in the heat. So, I just wait a little bit, then I scoop them out, wring them, and then throw them away. Meanwhile, Michelle started asking a bunch of questions.

“Can you only use that liquid for potions?” [Michelle]

“Of course, not. You can also use it for other stuff like killing undead, for example. Since the stored mana is light mana, having one or two vials with you can be a lifesaver.” [Ryouma]

Michelle thought for a while then she spoke.

“Can you use that in place of magic jewels?” [Michelle]

“In place of magic jewels?” [Ryouma]

“If it stores magic power, then it’s the same as magic jewels. Can’t you use the magic power that normally gets used for healing for something else?” [Michelle]

“It’s possible but it’s not easy.” [Ryouma]

The moss certainly stores magic power, but that magic power is gradually vanishing. So, unlike magic jewels it has an expiry date. It won’t last long in liquid form either, as

it'll only get worse with usage. And there's no point in storing magic power into it yourself since that'll just be wasting your own magic power.

Frankly speaking, it's much better to just go and buy some actual magic jewels. It's way more convenient and will save a lot of hassle, but apparently, Michelle had a different opinion.

"Can I get some of that liquid? I want to try something." [Michelle]

Michelle said that with a serious face. And as she got three vials from me, she thanked me.

"I'm borrowing the magic training room for a bit! I'll report my findings later! Sorry, I couldn't help out today!" [Michelle]

As she left the lab with those words, Remiri-san spoke.

"Ara ara... Seeing Michelle-chan like that sure reminds me of my days as a royal court magician." [Remiri]

"Really?" [Ryouma]

"There were a lot of people like her back there... She's talented too, so who knows? She might actually be a royal court magician one day." [Remiri]

She laughed as she said that.



By the time we were done working, Sebasu came to let us know supper was ready. So, we went to get Michelle, and when we entered the training room, Michell was there drawing magic formations with sparkles in her eyes.

Along the way, she told me that she tried to use the moss liquid in place of magic jewels for the ink, and she succeeded. Alchemy had to be used to balance the water content,

but with this discovery, the cost of magic formations would greatly go down. Michelle had a huge smile as she happily reported that.

Not bad, but I'm not about to lose just yet...

CHAPTER 14

THE BATTLE AT TRAIL CANYON

5 Days Later

After preparing for 3 days, we rode on Rheinbach-sama's Ignis dragons, and headed for the Trail Canyon. Right now, we're taking a breather somewhere in the mountain roads, but it won't be long before we reach Teresa, the town closest to the canyon.

Everyone's carrying an item or two with them, but most of our luggage is being stored in mine and Sebasus-san's Item Box and Dimension Home. I've especially packed plenty of medicine, weapon, equipment, and other tools in mine.

There's enough that we can afford to stay in the canyon for a long time and still have enough to sell to other adventurers. It's common courtesy for adventurers to help the ill-prepared. Of course, that's provided that there's material to spare.

Two of our party's members are S Rank Adventurers, and Sebasu-san and I can fight pretty well too. And when you add the grave slimes on top of that, there's no question that we have more than enough to watch over the girls' training. I mean if anything, this much is overkill.

Anyway, setting up the camp defenses at the canyon was my job. So, I'll be doing just that while selling to the passing adventurers and digging out magic jewels. The place hasn't really changed much in the past years. And with the grave slimes being the undead's natural predator, there won't be much for me to do.

"Should we head out now? We should be able to reach Teresa soon." [Rheinbach]

It'll probably take another 2 hours, which means... We'll be arriving at noon.

And so, we rode on the two dragons, and headed for Teresa. The dragon I'm riding on will listen to orders even if Rheinbach-sama's not riding it, so I'm sure we won't fall, but it's still nerve wrecking.

And I'm not sure why, but for some reason, these Ignis dragons don't seem to like me. They don't hate me, but they have their guard up... Ah, whatever. Rheinbach-sama did say that it's fine, so I'm sure it's safe. I'm sure they'll eventually get used to me. And people back at my previous life did say that animals can feel when people are nervous, so... Ah, wait, can I even put dragons and animals in the same basket?



A strong wind blew as we passed over the mountains, but the dragons continued on, unfazed. About an hour later, the walls of Teresa finally came to view.

“What a big town!” [Elia]

“It's gotten a lot bigger these past two years! It was so small back then too!” [Ryouma]

The sound of the wind drowned our voices, so we had to yell at each other to talk even though Elia was right behind me.

Teresa's no Gimuru but it's a lot bigger now compared to when I first visited it. A lot of undead had started appearing at the canyon, and when adventurers went to investigate, they happened upon a magic jewel vein. From then on, a lot of adventurers and diggers started coming, resulting in the town's exponential growth.

The town walls that appeared from a distance grew closer in the blink of an eye, a testament to the dragons' speed. We'd cause a ruckus if we were to land in town, so we landed some ways away from the town, and then walked. They were already expecting us, so when we got to the gates, there were eight guards all-in-all ready to receive us.

We did ride in a dragon after all, two no less. So, of course, they'd be able to prepare even without us asking them too. Thanks to that, the process went a lot smoother, and we were able to get into the town quickly.

It was then that Shiva-san spoke.

“We should be staying at the inn tonight, but we can also go ahead if you’re all fine with it. Is everyone tired already or...?” [Shiva]

It’s almost noon but we’ve already eaten, so there’s not really any reason to walk around town...

“I’m still fine. I was just riding at the back of the dragon, after all.” [Riera]

Everyone nodded. And so, we’ll be pushing our plans forward a bit. But before that...

“Can I drop by the adventurer’s guild? I figured I might as well get some simple requests.” [Ryouma]

No problem, they all said. Like that we headed for Teresa’s Adventurer Guild. The Town of Teresa is situated at the western edge of the country, a frontier, so to speak. Yet despite that the streets were hustling and bustling with people and carriages.

“There’s so many people even though it’s the border. Oh, by the way, would it be alright to dig some magic jewels myself?” [Kanan]

“As long as you give a part of it or pay the corresponding tax, then there shouldn’t be any problems.

I don’t know whether the lord in charge of this place is just tolerant or because he needs that much money, but he seems to be just watching how many the people can actually dig... He might also just decide to monopolize everything one day. Yeah, there’s a lot of rumors going around now, good or bad, but for now it should be fine.” [Ryouma]

The future is a mystery. Even if you can right now, that doesn’t mean you’ll be able to in the future, so you should take your chance now! ~Is what everyone else is thinking which is why there’s so many people here... Oh, we’re here.

We saw a couple of adventurers when we entered the guild. It's noon, so most of the adventurers are either out working or eating. It's a lot quieter here than outside, but as soon as we entered, all eyes focused on us.

...Most are just glancing, but a fifth of them are outright staring at us. Well, we do stand out, so it can't be helped. Ah, it seems there are people who know of Remiri-neesan and Shiva-san. I'm sure they must've been trying to be hush about it, but it's really quiet, so they can still be heard.

After I greet everyone, I walk up to the request board. Let's hurry and find something Elia and the others can do, and then get out of here. And just as I was thinking that, I found something suitable.

An investigation of the Trail Canyon that can be accepted anytime by E Rank adventurers up. The pay's cheap but they'll pay more if the info is good. It's really more of a patrol than an investigation, so it's really easy.

Also, because a lot of monsters appear in the night, it's recommended that only C Ranks above go. And as such, they'll also be paying more for those who can investigate in the night.

We were planning to stay at the canyon for a long time anyway, so we might as well. But was there always such a warning? While I'm sure it's necessary since lots of undead frolic in the night, a D-Rank should be enough. I should ask the receptionist first.

"Excuse me, I was thinking of accepting the Trail Canyon request but there's something I'd like to ask first." [Ryouma]

"Yes, what is it?" [Receptionist]

The receptionist was a young woman. From my conversation with her, I found out that there's a lot of people who have been going missing lately.

“It’s unfortunate but the issue isn’t just the undead. The footing in the area isn’t stable, and a lot of people have already disappeared in some accident. Because of that, we’re recommending that C Ranks go. Also, a lot of the people who have gone missing are low rankers who pushed themselves too hard in that investigation request.” [Recipe]

The receptionist was a bit sad when she spoke, but it shouldn’t be an issue as long as we take care...

“I understand. I’d like to sign up for this request. Oh, and do you have a list of the missing people? We’re planning to stay at the Trail Canyon for a while, so...” [Ryouma]

“Very well.” [Receptionist]

The receptionist immediately processed the request, and then came back with the list of names. The genders, ages, and other special characteristics were also written in the list. As for the time they went missing, well that wasn’t really important.



After that we left the guild, and then the town through the gate close to the Trail Canyon. The guards asked if we were going on a trip, and I said we were going camping. I’m sure they’re talking to me because it’s too hard to talk with the others.

“We plan to come back anywhere from one to two weeks.” [Ryouma]

“That’s a long trip, please be careful. A lot of people have been going missing lately.” [Guard]

Might as well ask them about it...

“Are there really that many?” [Ryouma]

“Well...” [Guard]

The guard made a troubled face as he looked at a particular direction.

“It’s because there are people like those, so...” [Guard]

At the end of that direction was---

“Let’s make lots of coin today too!” [Adventurer 1]

“Should we try going a bit deeper this time?” [Adventurer 2]

“That’s dangerous.” [Adventurer 3]

“Nah, it’ll be fine. We’ve beaten plenty of zombies, right?” [Adventurer 1]

“But---“ [Adventurer 3]

It was a group of three young, inexperienced adventurers.

“It’s great that the city’s flourishing, but a lot of reckless people have been coming too... But then again, there’ve always been reckless people around here, so if anything, I guess they’ve increase.”[Guard]

The guard whispered those words while watching the three leave. He was trying to keep up appearances, but I don’t think that’s really necessary.

“You mean like those people?” [Ryouma]

“Yes, like them. It’s especially dangerous the day after they make some bank. It’s safe around here unless they go in deep, so everyone who goes missing usually brought it on themselves...” [Guard]

I thanked the guard that seemed to have a lot on his mind, and then we left.



We traversed the mountainous roads and entered into the canyon.

People walked beside and above the now barren cliff, and people dug holes left and right, but as we continued, the people around us grew less and less. After an hour of

walking, there were still no zombies in sight.

“The undead still hasn’t shown up.” [Ryouma]

“I thought they’d be more proactive.” [Remiri]

“There sure are a lot of civilians here though.” [Elia]

“It’s still close to the town, so it’s not just adventurers who---“ [Ryouma]

While I was talking, a man dressed in blood-drenched clothes with vacant eyes walked up to us. Most of the man’s neck had been hollowed out, and his body was clearly rotting. It was a zombie. When the girls noticed that, they immediately assumed stance.

In contrast, Remiri-neesan casually spoke.

“There’s just one zombie, so relax. You’ll do fine as long as you follow your training.” [Remiri]

The girls nodded to her words. A rotting smell filled the area as the zombie approached, and the girls’ countenance visibly soured. Seeing that thing face-to-face is quite a shocker... Though I think they’d be nervous either way.

“Strengthen Body’... Let’s go!”

After a deep breath, Riera used her strengthening magic. She matched the speed of the zombie, then she swung down her sword. That flash embodied all the efforts she had spent training her sword. And it cut down the zombie’s left arm so quickly that it didn’t even have the time to cry. Then she followed up by bashing her shield against the zombie’s face.

“Elia!” [Riera]

“Fire Ball’!” [Elia]

As Riera called out to Elia, Elia casted a fireball, and the zombie was no more.

“Huh? That’s it?” [Kanan]

“Well that was easy.” [Michelle]

Complained Kanan and Michelle who didn’t have a chance to fight. Miyabi hadn’t said anything, but she seemed to think the same.

“Of course, it’s easy. You kids aren’t so weak that you’d have a problem offing one zombie.” [Shiva]

“Zombie flesh is a lot softer than a human’s, and their bones are brittle too. You girls cut a lot of bamboo back at Ryouma’s place, right? Then it’s only a given that you’d be able to cut one down with ease.” [Rheinbach]

“Your magic has gotten stronger too, and the one who shot that fireball just now was Elia who has the strongest magic of you lot. The real practice starts way deeper into the canyon. Being able to kill a few zombies is a given.” [Remiri]

“You’ve always been fighting against Ryouma-sama’s slimes, so you might not be aware of just how strong you are.” [Sebasu]

Zombies are D-Ranked magical beasts but they can be beaten even by E-Rank Adventurers when toppled over, so it’s obvious that the girls would be able to kill one. That’s also the reason why there’re so many greenhorn adventurers in the town.

Killing a few zombies won’t be an issue for them, so we’ll be leaving the fighting to them from here on out.

“This time I’ll be the one to finish it!” [Michelle]

“Riera, Kanan, stop them!” [Elia]

“Understood!” [Riera]

“Leave it to me!” [Kanan]

“Be careful, there’s a lot of them!” [Miyabi]

As their movements had got better over time, Riera and Kanan was able to quickly cut off the limbs of the zombies to stop them in their tracks, while a barrage of magic was unloaded on them to stop them from regenerating. And just like that, the girls offed seven zombies.

Meanwhile, we were nonchalantly watching the girls fight.

“They can still handle more.” [Shiva]

“Should we up the difficulty?” [Remiri]

“We should give them more to fight with...” [Rheinbach]

“How about ghouls and wraiths? The grave slime can bring them.” [Ryouma]

“I suggest allowing the ojousamas to get used to the zombies first.” [Sebasu]

We discussed like we were watching a sports tournament.

Then after some more walking, we made camp beside a cliff that was roughly 6 meters tall. Time for work, I guess.

I started preparing the girls’ food and the security of the camp.

CHAPTER 15

The next day.

I'm awake now, so I might as well make breakfast.

Last night I made camp by digging out a part of the cliff. I built an entrance and a lobby, left of which is a narrow passage that leads to the kitchen, washroom, and further in, the men's sleeping quarters. There's a stair right next which leads to the female sleeping quarters.

There's no difference in their design, I just segregated them. The rooms are reinforced by stone columns made by my 'Hardening'. There're also windows so we can see what's going on outside, and enough ventilation so that we don't suffocate. Finally, Holy Space was used to ensure that the undead don't attack our camp.

I've already been living in this world for 6 years. If you exclude the time I've spent travelling, that's 5 years that I've spent living in caves, so naturally, making something like this is a cinch for me. It only took me an hour to make camp, and I even had enough time to make tables and chairs. Naturally, no one was unhappy with my work.

"Fuffufuffufuffu, fuffufuffufuffu, fu~fuffufufuffu, fufufufufu~tto." [Ryouma]

I hummed a nostalgic song from my previous life to myself as I wrapped ham and vegetables in fried light wrapping, and poured hot water into a bowl of powder and hard food stuff. With this the Crepe and the Instant Soup was finished.

Crepes are delicious and easy to make. As for the instant soup, I made it by freezing it with ice magic, and then moving it into a clean vessel, and then sealing it in a vacuum. A magical freeze-dry, so to speak.

Freeze-dry can preserve food and medicine for a long time as long as one takes care

with stuff like moisture.

Hmm... Breakfast is ready. I wonder if Elia and the others are too?

I take a peek at the living room, and I find that everyone's ready. With that I bring out the food. The four adults are just as always but the girls aren't as lively as usual.

"Good morning, are you still tired?" [Ryouma]

"Good morning, Ryouma-san. We were able to rest well thanks to you, so it's no problem." [Elia]

I asked Elia that while I set the table, and when she answered, the other girls agreed with her. It didn't look like she was putting up an appearance, and she is eating well, so she's probably telling the truth. Since that's the case the reason they look so tired must be because they're still not used to the undead. I end up gloomy looking at those things too, so it's not like I don't understand. Anyway, I hope they do their best until then.

As I encouraged them in my mind, I began eating my portion.



After eating and making sure all of our equipment and luggage were ready, we went deeper into the Trail Canyon. The girls fought the undead as we travelled, but the deeper we went, the more undead came. The least they'd fight would be about 10 to 15 at a time, and the most at about 40 at a time.

" 'Fire Storm'!" [Elia]

"Elia, is your mana still ok?" [Miyabi]

"I'm fine. Though if possible I'd like to conserve them for a bit." [Elia]

"We're almost at our next camp site, so just brace yourself until then." [Miyabi]

There were about 43 zombies, so Elia had to start with Fire Storm. It's good that we

chose to rest in a place where it's easy to avoid being surrounded. We can easily beat them as long as we react quickly. But this sort of tactic puts a lot of burden on Elia. She has a lot of magic power, and the magic in the air here is thick, so she can quickly recover her magic. But if it were anyone else, he'd long have exhausted himself. The adults seem worried too.

"Isn't it about time we joined?" [Shiva]

"Those kids should still be able to handle it. Why not wait for a bit?" [Remiri]

"Well, it's true that they still seem to have some leeway, but..." [Rheinbach]

"It might be best to join before things get more dangerous." [Sebasu]

"Harris Crows will start appearing just a little further. We can join then." [Ryouma]

Lately, monsters other than zombies have started appearing in the Trail Canyon. Harris Crows, crow-like magical beasts, are one of them. I've seen plenty of them drop down from the sky in murders to feed off the zombies. That's probably the reason why they've started appearing here. There are much more of them now, and they are bigger as well. The girls won't be able to handle it if the undead attack them with the crows.

While we were talking, I suddenly felt someone staring at me. Immediately, I looked behind me.

"Someone's coming." [Shiva]

"A member of the bird tribe." [Sebasu]

"Just one?" [Remiri]

When I heard that, I focused my eyes. What I saw was a familiar face.

"That man is an adventurer from around here." [Ryouma]

"An acquaintance?" [Remiri]

"A familiar face, but that's all. I've traded with him countless times whenever I've had to feed my grave slimes here. I don't know his name." [Ryouma]

We're not even close enough to be called acquaintances.

The bird tribe is one of the many tribes of the beast tribe. They look similar to humans, but

they have wings behind them that let them fly. I hear there are also birdmen who have wings

for their arms, but because there's not a lot of birdmen in this country, I've never seen one. In fact, this guy is the only birdman that I know.

Sharp eyes and falcon-like wings, yeah, that's definitely him.

He spread his arms as he descended to indicate that he meant no harm.

"Greetings, my name is Oslo. I am patrolling these parts for the missing people." [Oslo]

So his name's Oslo. I didn't know.

Apparently, he's heard about Elia's group from the other adventurers.

We've passed a lot of people, so of course, we've been noticed. Apparently though, he didn't hear anything about us. All he heard was that there were five girls frolicking. He thought the place too dangerous for five girls, so he went to look for Elia and the others.

It's like that game, Chinese Whispers. Somewhere along the way the story changed, and now we have this version of the story.

The Fire Storm caught his attention, and he found out that the girls weren't alone, so the reason he showed up was just to make sure we don't misunderstand him or anything.

"Sorry for the trouble." [Elia]

“I did everything on my own accord. You don’t have to blame yourselves. And besides, I have business with him too.” [Oslo]

When the girls apologized, Oslo turned to me.

Eh? What does he need from me? But before I could ask, he spoke first.

“I’ve already exhausted the supplies I’ve brought for the search. Would it be possible to purchase some food from you?” [Oslo]

Oh, a customer. Didn’t expect him to remember me.

“I understand. How much will you be needing? I also have goods other than food.” [Ryouma]

“There’s 11 all-in-all in my team, myself included. Would it be possible to purchase enough food supply to support that? I’d also like to buy more of that salve I bought last time. It was quite effective.” [Oslo]

“I can give you enough to last for a week. I have potions too aside from salves.” [Ryouma]

“...In that case, I’ll have to rendezvous with my team first. I can’t carry that much by myself.” [Oslo]

So he can’t fly when he’s over encumbered. Oslo-san brought out a map, and we talked from a bit. From that it was decided that we’ll meet again at our next camp site.

It’s not that far from here, so he should make it by night fall.



After we went our own ways, we went deeper into the canyon.

As expected, the fights from here on out was a lot harder, so we finally had to join the fight. We joined alternatingly but sometimes we also had the girls take a breather

while they watched us fight in their place.

It sure is a pain having to fight these many undead. The girls seem to know it well. Especially, the magicians among them. I decided to talk to them for a bit.

“This place is crawling with undead. We’re here too but you should still be careful.”
[Remiri]

Ah, Remiri-Neesan also advised them. The reason she said that is because it would be a problem if they become negligent and forget their surroundings... It’s a good topic to discuss so I threw in my two cents too. But because the girls were holding their head, the atmosphere didn’t have any sense of urgency at all. Well, it’s better than being too nervous.



We continued like this, and when it was past afternoon, we finally reached our next camp site.

A rocky area several hundred meters wide with no cover could be seen extending up a full kilometer. The area beneath that was level and wide, so there was plenty of room. There’s a valley nearby and there’s also a river below the cliff, so we can get water even without magic. The magic jewels I’m going to excavate are also nearby, so it wasn’t a hard decision to make.

Speaking of which, everyone knows that I have a map pointing me to a magic jewel dig site. Of course, I kept the part about a goddess giving me this map a secret, so everyone just thinks that I marked some place that’s likely to have magic jewels.

“I’ll make camp now, so please wait a bit.” [Ryouma]

I looked up the sky as I said that, and I noticed that the sky was dark. It looks like it’s about to rain. I should hurry... There’s no cliff I can dig out this time around, so I’ll have to do something different.

“ ‘Earth Wall’ “ [Ryouma]

Somewhere near the valley, I started creating rooms using Earth Wall. I filled the wall joints with earth, and used the magic ‘Rock’ to cover them. Then I cut out doors and windows using ‘Stone Cutter’, while I used ‘Hardening’ to reinforce the structure. Finally, I covered the rooms with a plank cut out from a boulder to serve as the ceiling.

The floor plan is roughly the same as last night’s. What’s different is that the second floor is now situated to the right, and there’s now a fireplace and chimney. Next is to cast the magic, Holy Space, to keep the undead from attacking. Oh, and I should also put up a fence with my earth magic to serve as a barricade and land slide protection.

“It’s done!” [Ryouma]

It was mostly just me putting the pieces together, so the whole place looks like a prefab hut. It took me 30 minutes to finish everything.

Everything’s done. I should call Elia and the others...

“Fast as ever, I see... The camp is ready!” [Rheinbach]

When Rheinbach-sama saw my work, he called out to everyone. Remiri-neesan and the girls we’re talking when he called out, while Shiva-san and Sebasu-san we’re keeping watch. In any case, when called out to them, everyone gathered.

I was about to ask what they were talking about when a cold drop of water fell on my head.

“Rain...” [Elia]

Elia and the others also noticed the rain, so, we all hurried into the camp. Gradually,

the rain grew stronger. And in less than a minute, what seemed to be some light evening rain turned into a full downpour of bullfrogs.

I peeked through the windows, and I saw the sky covered in dark clouds. The world was dark, and not a thing could be seen.

“I’m glad I hurried, but what about Oslo-san? Hmm... Maybe I should at least put up a sign.” [Ryouma]

Closing the window through which the cold wind and the sound of falling rain entered, I took out my rain gear made out of waterproof cloth from my Item Box, and left the shed.

I quickly installed a glowing magic stone onto a pillar of stone modeled after the lamp posts in my previous world, and put it up. Then I hurried back into the shed.

“Good work.” [Kanan]

“Ah, thanks.” [Ryouma]

Kanan poured me a cup of hot tea.

As I sat in the living room, I took a mouthful. The honey and the ginger entered my body, and warmth filled me. I continued to drink tea like that as I spoke to the girls about the things that could be improved on in their tactics.

There’s nothing else to do, so for now, it’s a time for rest.

CHAPTER 16

OSLO AND HIS FRIENDS

In the room brightly lit by magic stones, we patiently waited for Oslo's group, but they were taking too long. We've had our supper, and yet we still haven't heard from them. They might have found themselves in some trouble, but searching wasn't an option right now. The most we could do was to prepare some soup to warm them when they arrive.

The cold wind blew with the pouring rain. Raingears could keep the water off the skin but it can't stop the cold. Going out now was a sure trip to sicktown.

The soup was instant, so all that was needed was to ready a bowl and some water. Of course, I didn't make it now. I just readied the ingredients. Anyway, that didn't take much at all and there's nothing else to do while waiting, so I took out the list of names and went through it.

I've skimmed through it once before entering the canyon, but that was just a quick read, a glance, in fact. There's nothing else to do, so I might as well give it a proper read through. Hmm... I don't think we came across any of these amongst the undead we fought.

"I can't think of any leads... Hmm? Most of the people that have gone missing are in their tens or early twenties. I guess the young ones really are just too energetic."
[Ryouma]

"*Cough!?" [Remiri]

Remiri-neesan choked on her tea, spurring out what she had in her mouth.

"Ryouma-chan, what are you talking like an old man for? Aren't you the same age? Sheesh, it's precisely because you talk like that..."

Even if you tell me that it's not like I can completely forget the fact that I'm a 40 year-old man. Although, there are times when it happens.

Anyway, I changed the topic and we talked about the list. I asked her if she had any leads, and she said she hadn't.

It's expected though. It's not easy to distinguish between one undead and another unless they have some odd feature that really sticks out. The zombies are rotten and the skeletons are just bones, so how are you supposed to tell which one's which? The only way to tell is based on their possessions, but...

"The equipment of new adventurers are mass produced, so... It's not much help. It would be great if they had some unique equipment on them, but..." [Ryouma]

"Yeah..." [Remiri]

Unless they're as rich as nobles or have received some gift from someone, almost all the adventurers have the same equips. In fact, a lot of those mass produced equips can be seen in town... It wouldn't be so bad if there were serial numbers imprinted onto them, but unfortunately, there aren't any.

"I guess that leaves us with no choice but to make out their features and pray that we notice one that matches the descriptions." [Ryouma]

"We have to do it before we kill them too, otherwise, the undead will turn into a puff of smoke, and we won't have anything left to examine." [Remiri]

And that's one more reason why this search is so difficult.



As we continued to talk like that, the sound of people walking and talking reached our ears through the continuing downpour. There's also the sound of metal mixed in.

We stopped talking to make out the sound better, and the source was indeed getting closer.

“It’s them, I think.” [Ryouma]

It could be the undead, so I looked out the window to be sure. There I saw a group of people in armor carrying lanterns for light. Leading that group was a birdman dressed in raingear. It was Oslo-san.

Remiri-san knocked on the door of the sleeping quarters, and she called out to the other eight who were fixing their equipment. The visibility here is poor, so just to be safe, we should make it easier to move in.

I pray there’ll be no need for it though.

I opened the door. “Oslo-san! Over here!!” [Ryouma]

Oslo-san raised his spear and called out when he heard my voice. He took his men with him as they went past the barricade, sheathed their weapons, and entered the shed.

“Sorry, I’m late. The road collapsed, so we had to take a detour.” [Oslo]

“For the meantime, please come inside. It’s cold out there.” [Ryouma]

So, that’s why they’re late. Anyway, they should go in first, so I invited them in, and offered them some seats. They took off their raingears as they took my offer. It’s a bit cramped now with 11 more people, as I did build this shed for us 10 to live in, but we’re all still fitting in.

5 of Oslo-san’s group are men while 6 are women. Their ages all seem to range from the 20s to their 50s. There’s probably more than one party here, and they’re collaborating for a job.

After Remiri-neesan called Sebasu-san, he showed up, and I went to the kitchen. I boiled the water with ‘Heat’, and then I emptied the pack of instant soup into it.

“We can talk while eating, so please warm yourselves up with this first.” [Ryouma]

“Thank you.” [Oslo]

I went back to the living room, and distributed the cups to the guests. They gratefully took them. Of course, they didn’t drink right away. They still had to check whether it’s been laced with some medicine or poison. A little later, they all started to drink. It seems that they were able to confirm that it’s not poisoned.

“Good soup.” [Oslo]

“Thank you. So, what’ll you do about the food supply?” [Ryouma]

“Right. Talk to Nell-san, she’s the one in charge of our food.” [Oslo]

The middle-aged woman sitting at the corner of the long rectangular table waved at me.

“Nell-san, I take it?” [Ryouma]

“Yep, that’s me. And you’re Ryouma-kun, right? I’m also running a small inn at Teresa, so drop by there too when you have a chance.” [Nell]

I did get her name from Oslo a while ago, but...

“You run an inn?” [Ryouma]

I asked as it made me wonder whether there were also other merchants working as adventurers other than me, but her response took me by surprise.

“Oh, no, I’m just the landlady. It’s my husband who actually runs the inn.” [Nell]

“Eh!? Landlady!?”

Why is the landlady in a place like this!?

“I actually retired last year and opened the inn with my husband but I’m working again temporarily.” [Nell]

Apparently, her daughter is also an adventurer but she went missing after coming here. Every one of them including Oslo-san has lost a family member or an acquaintance.

“I want to put a stop to it. I don’t want anyone else to suffer anymore, so I came here. Every one of us came here with those feelings. So, we’re like a vigilante group of some sort, and we’re patrolling here and there.” [Nell]

“I see...” [Ryouma]

“...Anyway, let’s talk about those supplies.” [Nell]

The conversation was starting to get heavy, so Nell-san changed the topic. I also didn’t ask anything else, and settled our business.

They want enough for one week just like Oslo-san mentioned. The contents include dried meat, smoked meat, hard bread, and baked sweets. It was mostly a bunch of preserved foods they were used to. She also asked for vegetables and medicine preserved with a magic tool. There’s 11 of them, so three times of meal a day for a week would mean 231 meals all in all. I opened my Item Box, and took out enough to satisfy their request.

It’s 30 suits per meal back at the restaurant, so 231 would be 6930 suits all in all. I offered to sell everything to them for 6,000 suits. With that we closed the deal.

“Thank you for your purchase.” [Ryouma]

“Thank you too for selling it cheap.” [Nell]

“By the way, what’ll you be doing from here on?” [Ryouma]

“We’re planning to make camp with our tents somewhere---“ [Nell]

“Then in that case, why don’t you spend the night here? It’s fine, right, Ryouma-chan?” [Remiri]

Remiri-neesan who had just been watching from a corner of the room all this time suddenly interjected. I said I didn't mind, and apparently, she's already gotten everyone else's permission, so like that everyone spent the night here.



The next day.

At the onset of dawn, the sun's rays entered through the window into the bare living room, waking Oslo-san and his men, upon which, they immediately prepared for departure.

"Good morning. I know it was a bit cramped, but did you have a good rest?" [Ryouma]

"More than good actually. It's been a while since I had a good night's rest." [Oslo]

"You even had your slimes wash our clothes, we're really grateful. Slimes are so convenient, I wish we had one at the inn." [Nell]

The other members felt the same way. It might be a good idea to put up a branch in Teressa.

After they finished their preparations, I sent them off.

"We'll go now" [Oslo]

"Please take care." [Ryouma]

"You too." [Oslo]

After Oslo-san and his group left, a man from their group came back. He named himself Barrack.

"Sorry, but can you sell me that thing you mentioned last night." [Barrack]

"Last night? Ah! Right, here. That'll be 50 suits." [Ryouma]

I took out a roll of tobacco from my Item Box. Adventurers kept asking me for tobacco when I came here before, and I couldn't meet the demand, so this time, I came prepared. It's still not that much though. And I don't smoke myself, so I actually even forgot about it. I only remembered it last night when Barrack-san asked.

It'd smell if I sold him some last night, so his friends told him to wait until morning since there's no way he was not going to smoke with a roll in his hands.

"Yeah, this is the stuff. I can fight another week with this." [Barrack]

"Please be careful not to smoke too much." [Ryouma]

"I know, I know. You take care too." [Barrack]

Is he talking about tobacco?

"I don't smoke though." [Ryouma]

"No, not that." [Barrack]

"You mean the undead, then?" [Ryouma]

"There's that too, but..." [Barrack]

He hesitated. But after seemingly battling with himself, he spoke in a hushed voice.

"...I'm here because of a friend that's like a younger brother to me who went missing. It's strange, you know?" [Barrack]

"What do you mean?" [Ryouma]

"Nothing weird about a greenhorn pushing too hard and finding himself in a ditch, but that guy wasn't the type. He was real cautious that one. There's no way he would've died over something like that.

...I can only think of one reason for that guy to die: something crazy must've happened. There's plenty of places to hide out here.

Not just for the undead but for people too. In fact, people found a suspicious cave whose entrance was hidden.

The guild's investigation didn't turn anything up, but it's not an undead. There's some weird bastard out there lurking...

Sorry. I'm just worrying you like this.

I don't have any proof for it. It might just be my imagination." [Barrack]

Barrack started off really strong, but for some reason, that conviction suddenly went weak.

"No, thanks for letting me know. I'll take care." [Ryouma]

"Yeah, you do that. If you find anything out, let the guild know. Later." [Barrack]

As Barrack-san said that, he left with Oslo and the others.

Anyway, there's no proof, and he's right about that, but it's definitely possible that something else other than the undead is responsible for the missing people. So, I informed the others about Barrack's tip.

CHAPTER 17

PRESENCE

After seeing Oslo's group off, we had breakfast, and then we began training.

After some light warmup and sparring, I took out 20 big grave slimes and 8 Rimel birds from my Dimension Home, and then I took out my guitar from my Item Box. Sitting myself in front of our camp, I strung the guitar once.

"Is everyone ready?" [Ryouma]

"We're ready!" [Elia and the other girls]

Seeing the girls ready to fight, I looked to the four adults who were also sitting on a chair for confirmation, and then I strung the guitar.

Dark magic erupted as I played the Cursed Song, and the undead began to gather in troves toward us.

Today's training is to have the girls fight to exhaustion. We don't need to move anymore, and our base here is plenty secured, so an injury or two won't be an issue. Today, neither me nor the four adults will be joining the fray. This one's all on them. Of course, we'll save them if things turn for the worse.

As I played the Cursed Song, the girls' long battle began.



20 minutes later...

"Just where did these things come crawling out of? I've come here loads of times with fresh recruits, and I've never seen these many in one place." [Shiva]

“Indeed...” [Rheinbach]

The number of undead shocked Shiva-san and Rheinbach-sama. I just played a few songs, and there’s already over 200 of them, so it’s not surprising.

Realizing that they won’t be able to handle these many without a plan, the girls created a barricade with earth wall and earth needle, slowing down the undead, then they took turns suppressing them.

A good decision. Being surrounded in an open area like this with that number would be fatal.

Riera and Kanan are fighting the zombies and skeletons, while the other three are taking care of the monsters immune to physical attacks like the wraith or flying magical beasts like the Harris crows, but the enemy just keeps on coming. Well, it’s partly also because I’m calling them, but this is certainly a bit much. Even I’m surprised.

“...Now what?” [Michelle]

“Nothing. Just keep it up.” [Miyabi]

“If we leave this barricade we’ll end up surrounded.” [Riera]

“That’s true. I could use my fire storm to clean them up, but...” [Elia]

“Don’t bother. They’ll just come again.” [Kanan]

Even if they clean one group up, another one will come to take its place. The most important thing in this training is to endure for a long time, so it’s best to conserve stamina and magic power.

If one runs out of steam during a long battle, the odds of one falling into a bad situation greatly increases. The purpose of this training is to train their body to get used to this pace.

While I was thinking that, I sent the Rimel bird to scout our surrounds to make sure

no passerby gets caught.



3 hours passed since then, and the undead just kept coming endlessly. The mental strain and fatigue on the five girls gradually built up.

“Tch!” [Riera]

“ ‘Earth Needle’ !” [Michelle]

After being surrounded by the undead, one of the barricades in front broke, and an undead slipped in. Riera instantly killed that one while Michelle shot out another Earth Needle, penetrating several zombies at the same time like some dumplings on a stick, effectively fixing the broken barricade.

“You ok, Riera?” [Michelle]

“Yeah, you saved me.” [Riera]

“Not really... Look.” [Michelle]

The two girls turned toward the Earth Needles she’d just shot out, and small cracks could be seen on them.

It wasn’t any worse than the earth needle before it, but behind the zombie they killed was a zombie, and behind that was another zombie, and behind that was a skeleton... With such a huge horde of undead crowding onto them, the earth needles can’t last long. And it’s not just the barricade, Riera’s sword is starting to dull after having cut so many too. In fact, she’s even started punching the undead with her gauntlets from time to time.

“Then, in that case, I’ll---” [Elia]

“Elia, you should rest a bit more.” [Miyabi]

Elia wanted to cut down on the undead’s number again, but she was visibly tired, so

Miyabi told her to stop as she took her place, and casted her own fire magic. Elia has a lot of magic power, so she's been casting advanced magic one after another to clear the undead, but after all that, she's almost out of juice.

I asked the adults.

"Isn't it about time?" [Ryouma]

Shiva-san immediately agreed.

The grave slimes are ready to go anytime. I was thinking of waiting another 30 minutes before intervening, but...

"Uwa!? Let go!" [Kanan]

"Kanan!?" [Elia]

"No!" [Riera]

The undead crowding the barricade tripped over themselves, and the skeletons behind used them as scaffold to cross the barricade. The fatigue must've caught up to the girls as they noticed it too late.

The skeletons fell down the barricade and were damaged, but they were able to surround Kanan, and throw themselves at her. The three magicians hit the skeletons with their staves in a panicked attempt to save Kanan, but by doing so, they left the barricade wide open, and their defense completely fell apart.

The undead poured in, pushing Riera down to the ground, and---

"That's enough! 'Sanctuary'!" [Remiri]

"Holy Flame Carpet" [Ryouma]

Remiri-neesan casted the advanced light magic 'Sanctuary', extinguishing the undead

inside the barricade.

'Sanctuary' is like a strengthened version of 'Holy Space'. Zombies and skeletons that enter its affected region will instantly be extinguished.

After Remiri-neesan saved the girls, I took care of the nearby undead while I left the ones further away to the grave slimes.

"Good work." [Ryouma]

"...Haa~..." [Girls]

When I said that, the girls lost all of their strength, and they sunk to the ground. As expected, they're really exhausted. But as long as it's just fatigue, then it's still alright. We did help them, so there shouldn't be any major injuries. At most, there'll be some light wounds. A little rubbing medicine, and they'll be fit as a fiddle.



After the girls took a bath with the cleaner slimes, we talked about their performance while they ate. After resting for a bit, they fought with the undead again. This time though, they didn't need my Cursed Song and the grave slimes. They just walked around, and normally hunted the undead. Shiva-san was supervising, and it was similar to what the knights did when they trained.

In the morning, they fought by the camp. In the afternoon, they fought while patrolling. When you think about it like that, it's a pretty balanced menu.

I'm not needed anymore since they're just patrolling, so I set off to mine those magic jewels. The grave slimes are really useful. Not only can they easily take care of the undead, I can even leave my back to them so I can focus on mining.

Come to think of it, if I leave the grave slimes here, won't they be able to wipe out the undead? I won't do it though, since they'll probably end up getting hunted by other adventurers without me around.

“We’re here. Although, it’s just a random place I chose that’s near the designated location on my map. I gave a lot of food to Oslo’s group, so I’ll have to go back to get more supplies in a week or two. Maybe I should have the girls go then?” [Ryouma]

Going to the camp from town means having to face more undead when you’re tired, while going back means facing less undead when you’re tired since you’re getting closer to the town.

There’s some time before we need to replenish our supplies, so they can get stronger in the meantime. Then when the time comes, we’ll leave them on their own to replenish supplies. If they make it without me and the adults interfering, then we can bring their training up another level.

“Yeah, let’s do that.” [Ryouma]

I opened my Item Box, and took out a mask for mining and a pair of protective goggles (Made with the sticky slime’s hardening liquid). Then I started digging out the cliff in front of me with my ki-infused pickaxe. The cliff was relatively soft, and I was able to steadily dig.

“Umph!” [Ryouma]

I couldn’t dig out any magic jewels even after I dug out nearly half of it, and instead, some odd translucent stone came out. I used identify on it.

“Barium Sulfate?” [Ryouma]

The rocks around here all have various kinds of metals mixed in them. It’s probably because a child of god used this place for magic practice that the topography of the place has completely changed. Anyway, as far as metals go, I know of aluminum, chromium, nickel, quartz, crystals, titanium, silica, limestone, etc., but I’ve never heard of barium.

“Barium Sulfate... Ah, it’s that. That thing they make people drink to prevent illness.”
[Ryouma]

I remember now. Barium sulfate is also that mineral known as barite, so it shouldn’t be poisonous. It’s mainly used for preventive medicine and paint, and... Was there anything else?

“There’s no point mining this thing. Did I make a mistake? There’s no point drinking it, and I don’t want to drink it anyway...” [Ryouma]

It doesn’t really taste good, so...

“...There’s no point mining something I have no use for, so yeah. I should just leave this spot alone.” [Ryouma]

I hardened the soil I’ve dug out so far with earth magic, preserving it as a sample for later use. I’ll come again when I can think of a use for it. I took out my map, and looked for that spot written on it again. Suddenly---

“Hmm?”

It was just for a moment, but it felt like I was being watched. I’m pretty sure there’s nothing around me though. I had the grave slimes use its ability to call the undead, but only normal undead came.

“...Was I imagining it?” [Ryouma]

Something was off, but I pulled myself together anyway, and walked through this rocky road.

CHAPTER 18

When the sun began to set, I went back home. The girls had already started making supper by the time I got back.

I talked to the four adults that accompanied them, and there weren't any major problems aside from their battles with the higher variation of zombies, the ghouls.

"It wasn't bad enough that we had to step in, but it took a while for them to subjugate the ghouls." [Shiva]

"They were just caught off guard since ghouls are much faster than zombies. They'll be fine as long as we throw 'em a ghoul or two to practice." [Remiri]

"I'll have the grave slime catch some then. Anyway, what do you think about that suggestion?" [Ryouma]

After hearing Shiva-san's and Remiri-san's thoughts, I talked to them about my idea to have the grils go back to town by themselves.

"Hmm... Even if we overestimate the time it would take them to go back and even with the time they'd spend resting added, I don't think it'd be a problem.." [Shiva]

"They made it here in 2 days with our help, so the five of them together should only take about 3 or 4 days at most." [Rheinbach]

Shiva-san and Rheinbach-sama seemed to like my proposition.

"How about you? How's it going on your side?" [Remiri]

"Nothing special. I've been digging magic jewels here and there. The grave slimes took care of all the undead, so there weren't any particular... Ah-" [Ryouma]

As I started to talk, I remembered that feeling I got in the afternoon.

“Did you guys experience something similar?” [Ryouma]

“Nope... And we would have realized it if someone were watching since we had our guards up just like you did.” [Remiri]

“Right... I called the undead, but I didn’t find anything unusual. Nothing came up either even after casting a search spell. Maybe it really was my imagination after all.” [Ryouma]

You get it from time to time. You know that feeling where while you’re washing your head you suddenly go, “Ah! Someone’s watching me!” But then, considering the situation, I don’t really think that’s it.

Suddenly...

“Kyaa!!!”

A high-pitched scream resounded outside. We immediately ran out of the house, and when we looked around, we saw Elia, Kanan, and Riera on their bottoms with their swords out.

I thought someone fell into the river, but their swords are out so I don’t think that’s the case. Around this time, Michelle and Miyabi also came running here. So, at the very least, if someone fell, it wasn’t someone we knew. Anyway, their swords are out, so it could be a magical beast or an undead, but... I don’t see any.

“What happened!” [Ryouma]

“We were trying to draw water from the river, but when we pulled the bucket up, something was inside.” [Elia]

Elia pointed to the fallen bucket to which a long rope was affixed. Something black was definitely there.

“Is that a fish? Or maybe a magical beast? It doesn’t look hostile though.” [Shiva]

“Could go either way, but... That’s really creepy.” [Remiri]

“Sebasu, do you know something?” [Rheinbach]

“No, unfortunately.” [Sebasu]

The adults discussed among themselves the identity of the unidentified mysterious animal. I have some idea myself what it is, but the bigger question is why it’s here...

“It could be a goosefish... or maybe a flounder. No, maybe it’s a stingray? Hmm... it could also be a catfish...” [Ryouma]

“Ryouma-kun, do you know what it is?” [Riera]

“No, but parts of it resemble some of the fishes I’ve heard of.” [Ryouma]

The fish had a flat body, and at its center was a bulge that resembled a dome. It had a pair of big eyes and a mouth like a goosefish, whiskers like those of a catfish, five on each side, and a tail behind it just like that of a stingray. The thin part of its body and its whiskers fluttered about as it squirmed on the ground.

It’s all jumbled up, I have no idea what it is anymore. Besides, aren’t catfishes supposed to live in the ocean? What is this thing doing in a river?

“...In any case, you girls were just scared by this thing, and you weren’t in any danger, right?” [Ryouma]

The girls nodded, apologizing for the trouble they’ve caused. I let them off, saying it’s good they’re not hurt.

“So, what to do with this?” [Michelle]

Michelle pointed to the fish crawling on the ground.

“...Eat it?” [Ryouma]

“You can eat that thing!?” [Elia]

“We did get a request from the guild to investigate... And there’s not a lot of other

reports we could give right now, so we might as well see if we can actually eat it. Identify says it's neither poisonous nor being fed on by parasites, so there shouldn't be any problems." [Ryouma]

It looks like the fish in my previous life too, so it's probably edible. Chances to eat fresh fish are rare in this country. In fact, I've never actually been able to eat fresh ocean fish since coming to this world, so I really want to eat it.

I took the fish and spread it over a workbench outside made with earth magic. The girls were using the kitchen inside, and everyone seems to find the fish disgusting, so I'm working here. I don't really see what's so disgusting though. I mean it is a bit grotesque, but it's not that bad.

Anyway, I used Identify on the mysterious fish.

The first thing I cut was the tail since I thought it might have poison, but apparently, it didn't have any. There're no parasites in its body either, but there's a lot of trash in its stomach and intestine. The stomach should be safe to eat as long as I run it through the cleaner slime first, but I think I'll have the scavenger slime take care of the trash inside the intestine.

After dissecting the fish, I found out its teeth had three layers. They were really sharp, and when broken, they could cut even better than knives. They could probably be used to make arrowheads.

I turned the fish around. The thin part of the fish's body resembled engawa. Looking good. I hope it tastes as good as it looks.

After inspecting the fish, I preserved most of its edible parts with ice magic. The girls had already made supper, so we won't be able to eat most of this, but I'd at least like to have some of the engawa.

I heated the engawa for a bit until it was crunchy, then I took a bite... Delicious! It was like butter as it melted in my mouth, filling every corner with its flavor. My body came

undone.

“Ryouma-san, supper’s almost ready.” [Elia]

“Eh? A-Ahh! Right!” [Ryouma]

When I looked to the direction of her voice, I noticed she was calling me from a distance. Does she hate this thing that much?

After heating the engawa, I served it to everyone as part of the day’s supper, and they all seemed to like it. But, for some reason, everyone except the two former soldiers, Rheinbach-sama and Shiva-san, mentioned that they didn’t want to eat it frequently despite being delicious.

This fish tastes good but it looks weird. Their disgust for it must be on a psychological level.

I’m happy the fish is delicious, but it’s too bad they don’t like it that much. Like this the night passed.

CHAPTER 19

The sun high above shone on me as I looked down the flowing river below the cliff, at which I used the neutral magic 'Search'.

"There's a lot especially on the riverbeds... It's easier to count them during this time as they move slower than in the morning." [Ryouma]

I wrote down the information I got on a piece of paper padded underneath by a stone plank. This is a journal I started to record my findings on the goosefish-like fish.

I perform my investigation twice every morning, noon, and evening, which totals to six times. I'm studying their habitat, their mode of life, and the time of day they're most active. From my investigation, I've found them to be most active early in the morning when it's still dark, so I figure they must be nocturnal. I should put more effort in studying them during early morning and evening.

I wrote down my thoughts and estimations on the corner of the paper, then I put away my writing tools in my Item Box.

I then took out a rope woven out of the sticky slime's thread and a large fishing hook I'd hurriedly made with Alchemy. I hung a piece of smoked meat on the hook along with some weight, then I let it down the cliff into the river, tying the other side of the rope around a stake created from the earth through earth magic. It's a setup meant to catch more of those fishes.

I tried it earlier this morning, but the fishes just bit through the rope. This time I'm using a rope made out of the sticky slime's thread, so they shouldn't be able to bite through it as easily.

After ensuring everything was working, I walked back to camp.

When I turned around, I saw a giant slime swallowing hordes of undead that systematically walked toward it to be eaten.

Meanwhile, my rimel birds were peacefully sunbathing.

The giant slime was of course my grave slime in emperor form. The emperor slimes have already been made public in the tournament, so I don't mind brazenly using it like this, where it's swallowing undead after undead while in its biggest form.

Being over 10 meters in diameter, it looks just like a hill.

The emperor grave slime looks really happy but I'm actually doing this to find the missing people. Sure looks like horror though; all those undead being swallowed one after another with only an arm or a skeleton's head poking out of the slime's mouth from time to time.

Speaking of which, the undead won't attack me since I'm inside a holy space. Although with the emperor grave slime using its skill to lure them, they won't attack me even if I stepped out.

Still...

"...You're doing this again?" [Ryouma]

I looked toward another group of undead. From an otherworlder's perspective, the movements of those undead couldn't be anything else but that famous dance from my previous life.

Actually, it's just one part of the dance... In any case, it's not like they're dancing on their own volition, it's the grave slime that's making them do it. It's been doing this ever since it learned 'Ghost Rule' after becoming a king slime.

Under 'Ghost Rule' the undead move slower and clumsier, so it can't be used to make

the undead fight other enemies. It's mainly a skill to keep undead from running away when they somehow manage to resist the effects of 'Attract Ghosts'.

I thought the skill might improve after some training, so I had the grave slimes practice the skill by making the undead move like that dance from that promotional video I once saw. But even after the slimes managed to control 20 undead, the movements of the undead never improved.

For reasons unknown, the grave slimes would sometimes make the undead dance like that on its own.

If they like it that much, I'd like to teach them the whole dance, but unfortunately, I'm not that familiar with dancing, and I don't remember the whole dance to begin with. Because of that the undead just keeps dancing the same part over and over.

I went back to the shed at the camp, and brought out a chair with me. I sat by the holy space outside, then I ordered the slime to stop gathering undead and show me the undead it's gathered one by one.

"Let's start!" [Ryouma]

With the list of the missing people on one hand, I started searching.



"Fuu..."

After quietly working some time, I breathed out a sigh and stretched my body, then a voice came from the direction where the emperor grave slime had started gathering zombies again.

"Ryouma-chan, we're home!" [Remiri]

Remiri-neesan is home already? It was then that I noticed that the sun had already started to set. Looks like I worked longer than I thought.

“Welcome home, Remiri-nee... huh? Where are Elia and the others?”

I had the slime move out of the way, so I could better see them, but the girls were nowhere to be seen. It doesn't seem like they ran into any sort of trouble. Did they go somewhere?

The four adults began explaining.

“The young ladies are still training.” [Sebasu]

“I thought it was about time to stop for the day, but they still wanted to train some more.” [Shiva]

“They said they won't go far away, and if anything were to come up, they would just throw a fire bomb up to the sky, so there shouldn't be any problems.” [Rheinbach]

“They'll be fine with their current strength.” [Remiri]

They have been making great progress lately. When we first met, they were about as strong as a newly promoted D Rank party. And now, they're only a step behind a C Rank. Their progress really rocketed after Shiva-san and Remiri-neesan started teaching them.

Shiva-san and Remiri-neesan mentioned that my training menu was like fertilizer for the girls. And because they were hardworking and talented from the start, it was really easy to teach them. So it's not strange to see how they were able to make such great progress.

Even if they do get surrounded, they can just blow them away with their magic. In the worst case, they can just run away.

“True, they have gotten strong enough to walk near the camp unaided.” [Ryouma]

“So what are you calling your rimel birds for then?” [Remiri]

Just to be safe I called the Rimer birds over. Remiri-neesan's sharp eyes didn't miss that, and she laughed. She asked me why, but it seemed to be rhetorical as she just went ahead and teased me without hearing my reply, saying, "Ryouma-chan likes to spoil them, huh."

"That aside, did something happen? You seem a bit down." [Remiri]

"Nothing in particular. It's just that I've been looking for the missing people for a while now." [Ryouma]

"I see... And? Did you find one?" [Remiri]

"Just two." [Ryouma]

But that was from dozens of undead... Looking for them is a chore, and yet even if we do find one, all we get is a corpse. It's pretty disheartening.

Remiri-neesan and the other adults looked worried about me, so I put a stop to the search today.



When the three Rimel birds arrived, I used Sensory Link with one of them to look for Elia's group. They were right next to us just as Rheinbach-sama mentioned, so I found them almost immediately.

I continued to watch over Elia's group with the Rimel bird I'd linked with, while the other two birds patrolled the surroundings.

The girls were surrounded with twelve of the undead. But there was a narrow path between two cliffs which they entered, severely reducing the number they had to face at a time. A good move. With this they've also secured a path of escape. There was a ghoul among the undead but Riera managed to defeat it while protecting the others.

After finishing off the rest of the undead, they left.

As I continued watching them, I saw them use a magic I hadn't seen before.

“ ‘Spike Carpet’ ” [Michelle]

Was that an earth version of the fire magic ‘Flame Carpet’? I've never heard of it, but countless barbs with small sharp stones sticking out of them came out of the ground, hurting the legs of the rushing undead. Those barbs were like caltrops, but they seemed to latch on for when the zombies and the ghouls stepped on them, their movements went wonky, and they came tumbling down. The spell didn't seem effective against the skeletons, but with a gap between the undead made, the girls could now fight a smaller clump.

Elia then casted a ‘Firestorm’ just as she did whenever they would find themselves surrounded. Only, this firestorm was different.

Her usual firestorm was literally a cyclone of fire that consumed her foes, yet this firestorm was summoned around the entire group, turning into ash all of the undead that surrounded them.

Where and when did she learn something like that?

“Elia and Michelle both used a magic I'd never seen before. Did you teach them? That firestorm wall and that bed of nails?” [Ryouma]

“That's something they came up with themselves after plenty of trial and error.” [Rheinbach]

“Elia-chan improved a lot at controlling her magic power, so she tried to come up with other ways to use it. As for Michelle, she figured she could create her own magic too after watching you.” [Remiri]

Rheinbach-sama and Remiri-neesan said that as they happily drank their tea. So they came up with that themselves... Somewhere when I wasn't watching, they suddenly grew up all on their own.



As the girls continued to practice, I quietly watched over them through the rimel bird. But then a murder of Harris crows suddenly attacked the rimel bird.

When the murder of Harris crows attacked, the Rimel bird used a wind spell to scare them away. It was the wind spell, 'Sound Boom'. A spell I'd taught it.

The booming sound scared the Harris crows away, but the sound also reached the girls, and they decided to stop for the day.

They must've thought something strange was going on. It's a place where people frequently went missing after all, and they've never seen me use Sound Boom either, so it's no wonder they decided to go back.

I feel bad for scaring them.

I waited outside for the group to come back. When I saw the five girls trotting back, I waved at them, to which they waved back with a sword in hand, a staff, or just their hands. After they confirmed there were no undead nearby, they ran back to our camp.

"Welcome home." [Ryouma]

I welcomed the girls back when they arrived, but they immediately started talking about a booming sound they'd heard. When I told them what that sound actually was, they all promptly lost strength in their legs.

They didn't feel like going back to train again after that, and they just went and rested while they tended to their equipment.

CHAPTER 20

6 days later.

It's been exactly one week since I found that goosefish-like fish. Right now, I'm walking through the canyon, watching over the girls as they attempt to go back to town on their own.

"Last one!!" [Kanan]

" 'Rocket Punch' !" [Elia]

Elia's magic pulverized the three skeletons in front of them. After confirming the skeletons gone for good, Kanan spoke.

"...It's over. Let's rest for a bit." [Kanan]

"According to the map there's a place we can rest at just a little up ahead. And since we're resting anyway, we might as well have lunch early." [Riera]

"Sounds good. And in fact, since it'll take time to prepare the food, we'll probably end up eating just in time anyway." [Michelle]

Our training these past few days involved me gathering ghouls for the girls to fight in the morning, while Shiva-san would instruct them on marching in the afternoon. Thanks to that they can now end their battles safely.

The battles became even easier when Elia learned my original magic 'Rocket Punch'. Don't get fooled by the name though. Despite being called Rocket Punch, the spell doesn't actually have anything to do with punching stuff. It's actually just bashing a lump of magic power against something, so even someone like Elia who's relatively untrained compared to their group's two vanguards or me, can knock the undead down. In fact, she's more than able of taking out up to six targets at a time.

On top of that, it also works against creatures immune to physical attacks like wraiths.

And with the magic consumption being only about the level of an intermediate magic, for someone like Elia who's used to handling advanced magic like Firestorm, handling this spell is a cinch. I only taught it to Elia because she asked after seeing me use it, but it seems to suit magicians like her who have lots of magic power.

The battles aren't a problem anymore, but the girls still aren't used to moving with their guards up. They get tired easily, so they end up having to rest a lot, which in turn slows down their pace. In fact, it's already the third day since we left.

After a little walk, we reached a partially caved cliff. Looks like we're stopping here for a break. Riera, Kanan, and Michelle spread out into a fan-shaped formation, covering each other's blind spots. They kept a lookout like that as they called out to us.

"Fuu... We'd like to rest here." [Elia]

"Well, don't mind us." [Shiva]

"Right. You should just go on your own pace, Elia-chan." [Remiri]

Elia seemed apologetic when she said that since we had to match their pace, but Shiva-san and Remiri-neesan just told her and the others that they didn't mind. It's true that they're slower than us, but it's not like we're in a hurry. We really don't mind.

When I told her that, she quietly laughed and took out the magic tool that could pour water, and some dried meat. Looks like Elia and Miyabi will be prepping our food. They already learned this from school, so they could already do it well.

The undead would frolic into our camp from time to time, but the three girls that were keeping watch made short work of them, so we just passed the time waiting for food by patrolling the area and making light talk.



"Alright! Let's go!" [Michelle]

"We might even make it to town today. Though we'll definitely make it by tomorrow as long as we proceed carefully." [Riera]

“Just a ‘lil bit more, we’ll definitely get there.” [Miyabi]

After eating and resting in turns, then confirming the route they would take, the girls excitedly resumed their journey. The four adults and I followed from behind.

The girls still found themselves running into an undead or two, but their numbers were clearly decreasing. We’re getting nearer. Thanks to that, the girls were able to increase their pace without straining themselves.



Then evening came—

By the time the sky was red, we could see holes dug by adventurers here and there. They must’ve left before it got dark. There were no people in sight, but we were definitely close. A glance at the map proved that. We should be able to reach town before it gets really dark.

It was then that Kanan suddenly spoke.

“Huh...?” [Kanan]

“What’s wrong?” [Michelle]

“Is something the matter?” [Elia]

The girls immediately went on guard. I did too, and I even asked the adults with a glance whether they could sense something, but their response indicated a no. Then Kanan inhaled deeply through her nose.

“I knew it! The adventurers we met a while ago are somewhere nearby.” [Kanan]

A while ago?

“You mean Oslo-san?” [Ryouma]

“Right. I can smell the same perfume from the wind.” [Kanan]

The woman with them didn't take baths while in the canyon because the rotting smell of the undead would just stick, so she just put on some perfume instead. That's probably what Kanan is picking up, though I can't say for sure. Beast tribe people sure have amazing noses. Ah, but it seems Miyabi has no idea either, so I guess it's just the dog tribe that has amazing noses.

“I can't pinpoint exactly how far they are, but I can tell they're right on our course.” [Kanan]

“They bought a week's worth of supplies last time, and it's almost a week already. They must be on their way home too.” [Remiri]

“Since we're coming from the same direction, we might as well say hi.” [Ryouma]

No one opposed the idea, so we went ahead and headed for Oslo's group. After a ten-minute walk, 11 figures entered our sight. They were resting against some rocks by the corner of a road that was about as wide as four adults standing side-by-side with their arms spread. One of them had wings extending from his back. This was undoubtedly Oslo's group, but...

“Something is off.” [Shiva]

“Maybe something happened.” [Remiri]

They made small movements like shaking or scratching their head, but they weren't saying anything. They're just standing with their backs against the stones like that with their heads down. From the faces I could make out, their eyes seemed to be closed. I can't figure out whether they have their guard up or are just resting.

They could also just be tired. But they're supposed to be veterans. They should've long been used to this kind of work. Yet a group of people like that actually ended up so fatigued that they can't talk? If that's true, then something big must've happened.

I walked ahead of the group, while the four adults kept the girls from following. They must've thought the same thing. As I approached the odd group, I stealthily braced

myself before greeting them.

“Good day-!” [Ryouma]

When I greeted them, all of them took their weapons out and headed toward me. It was as if they hadn’t noticed me a while ago, and were just now realizing my presence.

“It’s me. I sold you food. Remember? And-” [Ryouma]

While I tried to break the hostile atmosphere, I put my left hand on my katana just in case. But just as I was trying to talk to them, seeing their faces made me stop.

“...”

There were no wounds on their bodies. They were no different from a group of extremely cautious adventurers. But their expressions... It was as if they’d lost all emotion as every one of them wore the same expressionless face.

Something is very wrong! I thought. Then I realized that a blunt, shiny object was thrusting for my throat. It was Oslo-san’s spear. I immediately leaned back and retreated, as I unsheathed my katana, and fended off the spear.

I’d intended to cut the spear, but Oslo-san managed to retreat... There’s no doubting it. Just now, he was aiming for my neck. That could’ve been fatal.

“Step back!” [Shiva]

“Get ready to move whenever!” [Rheinbach]

The four adults stepped forward as they warned the girls to protect them. Shiva-san and Rheibach-sama walked up to my side.

“...That was a bit dangerous. I could’ve died if it hit, you know?” [Ryouma]

While our relationship wasn't deep, it still felt bad getting attacked like that. So, I ended up saying something lighthearted.

...I don't think they're bad people though. They might be able to fool me with some good-guy act, but there's no way they could fool the four veterans with us. So does that mean they really have turned into undead? But they're uninjured. There are no wounds or anything on them. The only thing off is that pale complexion of theirs, but it's not so bad that they look like corpses or anything. Yet there's no denying that Oslo-san really did try to kill me just now. Moreover, there's that issue with their expressions and their lack of response. They don't feel human at all... Looks like we're gonna have to fight.

Oslo-san stepped back and regrouped with 10 of his other members. They stood in formation as they set their sights toward us. Then Rheibach-sama, who was standing to my left, suddenly spoke solemnly.

"These people are being controlled." [Rheinbach]

"Controlled...!" [Ryouma]

Like brain washing!?

"I've seen it many times back in the army. I don't know if it's good fortune or not, but they're not dead. We can treat them after catching them. There's quite a bit, but it should be doable, no?" [Shiva]

This time Shiva-san spoke grimly from my right. The way he spoke seemed to suggest I could expect much from the battle. At the same time, he seemed to be asking, yet the way he said it seemed less a question and more a conclusion.

Not that it matters anyway. If they're alive then there's only one thing to do!

"Sorry about this! 'Rusty Mist!'" [Ryouma]

I took the first move and casted the dark and water spell 'Rusty Mist'.

With its wide area-of-effect and a cliff on either side of the path here, there's no way for them to dodge. And like that a thin, black mist shrouded them. However, there was a wind mage on their side, and it only took the mage a spell to blow away the mist. But that was more than enough. Because now the three vanguards of theirs have had all their metallic equipment rusted. Even Oslo-san's spear couldn't escape that fate.

The three vanguards attacked regardless of their rusted equipment.

"Amateur!" [Shiva]

Shiva-san thrust his halberd toward the woman armed with a mace and a shield. The woman raised her shield to protect herself, but that was exactly Shiva-san's aim. With the rusted shield already weakened, it could not stand the ki-infused attack. The shield broke, and its fragments fell to the ground. During which, Shiva-san brought his halberd back, then struck the woman with the halberd's butt, breaking her legs and arms, effectively incapacitating her. As expected of the former knight-commander and a current S-Rank adventurer.

The woman wasn't the only enemy, however. And a man came swinging with a battle hammer from his left. It was then that Rheinbach-sama appeared, flashing his sword as he passed the man, cutting the man's leg as he turned around. He didn't cut the whole leg, only the tendon. That was enough to render the man incapacitated. As the hammer fell to the ground, the man came tumbling shortly after.

I can't be standing around, doing nothing either. Let's see, the next one is also a man... Ah, it's Barrack-san.

I struck out with the back of my katana toward his shoulder, and Barrack-san tried to block with his rusted sword, only to have it break as my katana crushed his shoulder. As he fell to the ground, I struck his left shoulder one more time, then I broke his left leg. With this he's out. That makes three! Next!

Their group's mage also casted magic against us, but Remiri-neesan and Sebasu would either repel with their own magic or keep the mage from casting, so it wasn't a problem. After two minutes, we were able to safely suppress everyone without killing.

...The battle was a lot easier than expected, though that was mostly because they moved poorly. It was probably because they were being controlled that they couldn't bring out their full strength. In terms of undead, they're actually worse than the ghouls. Even their teamwork was poor.

"U, u, u..."

"Save... me..."

"Ru...n..."

After taking away their weapons, tying them up with a rope, and handcuffing them with cuffs made with earth magic, we started their treatment. It didn't take long before this group that had been quiet all this time started groaning. Remiri-neesan examined them.

"Is everything alright?" [Ryouma]

"There shouldn't be any problem. They've just finally recovered their consciousness."
[Remiri]

"I see... So, what is all this about?" [Ryouma]

Finally able to ask the question that's been bothering me since the battle, I asked with no reserve. Remiri-neesan and Shiva-san frowned before appearing worried, then they looked toward Elia's group. They were standing some distance away, but they were clearly concerned about our discussion. Is this something they want to keep from the girls?

In that case...

"I have plenty of ways to keep others from listening in our discussion, you know?"

[Ryouma]

“Nah~, it’s fine even if they hear. As long as they know just enough anyway.” [Remiri]

So it really is a bad topic... Well it’s no surprise I suppose, I’d already thought it would be ever since brain washing came to mind.

“These guys were definitely under the influence of a dark spell, the Curse of Obedience. And just as the name implies, those under the spell have no choice but to obey whatever the caster ordered them to do.” [Remiri]

“So it really was that sort of magic...” [Ryouma]

“Right. But the only ones who can use it are those few permitted by the country. And even then it’s usually only used as a last resort in some criminal investigations or against some major criminal. I don’t know who would use something like that here, but I find it hard to believe they would just use it to attack people...” [Remiri]

“Either way it’s a big problem.” [Ryouma]

“Exactly! Ugh, my head hurts... We might find something out if we undo the spell, so let’s focus on that first. You’ll help out too, right, Ryouma-chan?” [Remiri]

Naturally.

“So, what do I do?” [Ryouma]

“You can undo the curse with either the light magic, Dispel, or the dark magic, Curse Transfer. If it looks like you’re about to get cursed yourself, you can just use Anti Curse or Return Curse. So the same as usual.” [Remiri]

“Alright.” [Ryouma]

I thought we would be working separately, but Remiri-neesan stopped me.

“It would be better to work together. Lifting this kind of curse puts a lot of strain on the afflicted, so they might go wild. There’s no telling what’ll happen after the curse is lifted either. Lifting the curse as quickly as possible is the best way to minimize the strain.” [Remiri]

“...Sure is an annoying curse.” [Ryouma]

“That just how dangerous of a spell it is.” [Remiri]

Well, it is a brain-washing spell. It’s not hard to imagine it having bad side effects.

Elia and the other adults kept watch while Remiri-neesan and I went to work.

After talking a bit more, it was decided that I would be using Curse Transfer while Remiri-neesan used Dispel. Image-wise, I would be pulling the curse from their body while Remiri-neesan would be pushing the curse out from behind.

“N-No more...” [Oslo]

The first patient was Oslo-san. Among the patients he babbles the most. That was proof that he was regaining his consciousness, so Remiri-neesan chose him to be the first.

Oslo-san, I’ll do my best.

I pulled out a pitch-black wand from my Item Box. The wand itself was gloss-less, but the hexagonal, black, crystal prism attached at the end of it, sparkled brilliantly. I bowed to Oslo-san before starting.

“Are you ready?” [Remiri]

“Yes!” [Ryouma]

This wand is made from the branch of the elder treant we defeated a long time ago and the fragment of the demon king. I applied the method of using Everlasting Darkness (Herb) that I learned from Remiri-neesan with the skill of wand-making learned from Tekun to create this magic wand that specializes in dark magic.

It’s a product that has received Tekun’s seal of approval, so you could imagine just how powerful it is. In fact, I rarely use it because it’s usually overkill to use with offensive

dark magic. I even feel guilty every time I recall trying it out on those poor bandits once... But I digress.

This time around, I'm just going to be using it to lift a curse, so it doesn't matter how powerful the wand is. I can go all out.

"I'm starting, alright? Match my timing... 1... 2... 3... 'Dispel' " [Remiri]

" 'Curse Transfer' " [Ryouma]

"...R..." [Oslo]

When we started, Oslo-san abruptly shook then stiffened. Then he started shaking again, but this time he was clearly in pain.

"R... u..." [Oslo]

"Run!!!" [Oslo]

Oslo-san suddenly screamed. I was warned of the patient possibly going wild, but this patient sure isn't hesitating even a little.

"!?"

There shouldn't have been anything above my head, but out of the blue, I felt magic power gather in that supposedly empty space.

CHAPTER 21

I wasn't the only one to notice the gathering of magic power over my head, Rimiri-neesan noticed it too, and we both looked up. When we did, what greeted us were the bones of a human covered in tattered rags and some confusing clothing, floating there about 10m above the ground.

What's a skeleton doing up there? And why didn't I notice it until now?

It was curious, but I knew without a doubt that the source of that magic power I felt was none other than that floating skeleton. I could also tell from the eerie feeling emanating from it that that magic power was the same kind as that used in curses.

Remiri-neesan thought the same, and we both stopped Oslo-san's treatment at the same time as we both tried to erect our own defensive spells, but—

“Ka ka ka...” [???

The faint sounds of what seemed to be laughing bones reached my ears. The target was me.

No! It's already begun casting!

Please make it in time! I prayed as I poured all of my strength into my defensive magic.

Time slowed to a crawl, and it felt like I could see everything as it all unfolded before me.

The other eight who were keeping watch all started casting their magic toward the skeleton. The adults first, then the girls, who were only a moment slower, but the skeleton had a head start.

In the midst of that chaos and confusion, only one spell fired.



From my shadow...

“Ka!?” [???

...stretched out a black pillar that reached for the heavens, grazing past the skeleton’s cheeks as it did. But that only happened because the skeleton dodged. If it hadn’t that pillar would have gone right through its forehead.

” ‘Return Curse’ !” [Ryouma]

” ‘Cutter Storm’ !” [Rheinbach]

” ‘Flame Bomb’ !” [Shiva]

” ‘Water Cutter’ !” [Sebasu]

The black pillar vanished like mist blown as it missed its target, while the skeleton cast its magic toward me. But dodging that pillar delayed it, and my Return Curse made it in time. As the skeleton’s spell deflected, Rheinbach-sama, Shiva-san, and Sebasu-san simultaneously shot their spells.

The skeleton tried to dodge the onslaught of spells, but it failed, and the three spells smashed into it. However—

“It’s still alive!” [Ryouma]

The three spells definitely hurt the skeleton, but they weren’t enough to finish it off. I’m not sure exactly how, but this thing isn’t like the rest of those weak skeletons!

“Ka!? Kaka!” [???

“Hmm?” [Ryouma]

“It ran...?” [Riera]

I braced myself for an attack, but the skeleton just flew higher and higher before finally bolting off. When Riera spoke, the skeleton had already vanished toward the cliff.

“Are you ok? Sorry for letting that thing get through.” [Shiva]

“I’m fine. These slimes saved me.” [Ryouma]

I ordered the slimes to show themselves, and 10 shadow slimes came out of my shadow. The earlier spell was none other than these guys’ Shadow Needle.

Looks like it finally paid off having these shadow slimes shadow me all the time. I would’ve been in a pretty bad spot had they not been here. I’ll feed them plenty of magic power later as a treat.

“Still, just what in the world was that skeleton?” [Remiri]

“That was a lich.” [Remiri]

“Lich, as in that lich?” [Ryouma]

“Naturally.” [Remiri]

Liches are a higher variation of wraiths that specialize in magic. Their magic and fighting style vary from specimen to specimen, but their strength is enough to get them at the very least a B Rank subjugation request.

I’ve heard of liches, but it’s my first time seeing one.

“It probably used the dark magic, Hide, to shroud its presence while it quietly approached us from the sky. Considering, the timing and the fact that it tried to curse you just now, it might have been the one responsible for the curse behind Oslo’s group.” [Remiri]

“Ex...act...ly” [???

“!? Oslo-san!” [Ryouma]

While Remiri-neesan was explaining her hypothesis, I heard a weak voice from behind. I impatiently turned to that voice, and what I saw was none other than Oslo-san. We stopped the treatment halfway through, yet he actually managed to regain consciousness!? Is his body alright!?

“Oslo-san, how are you feeling?” [Ryouma]

“Can I have some... water?” [Oslo]

I quickly prepared a glass of water with the right balance of water and sugar added into it, and gave it to Oslo-san, who thoroughly emptied the glass.

“Thanks... I’m feeling better now.” [Oslo]

“How about your mind? Are you able to think straight?” [Ryouma]

“I still... have to focus... or else... ugh.” [Oslo]

As he suddenly lost strength in his legs, I hurriedly went up to support him.

“Oslo-san! ...He’s fainted.” [Ryouma]

He’d fainted, but there wasn’t anything odd about his breath or his countenance.

“Ryouma-chan, please cast Curse Transfer again. His condition should change for the better so long as we completely undo the curse.” [Remiri]

“It’s also best that we leave this place as soon as possible. Sorry to hurry you, but please quickly finish the treatment for the others as well.” [Rheinbach]

“I’m on it!” [Ryouma]

I want to leave here too, but we have to undo their curses first or they might suddenly go crazy... We have to hurry.

After that Remiri-neesan and I did our best to quickly treat Oslo and his group. One small mercy is that while Oslo and his members seemed weak, there was no danger to their lives.

After hiding them in Sebasu-san's Dimension Home, we resumed our trip back to town.



We walked through the narrow path surrounded by cliffs until we reached an open space, where we all entered the Dimension Home.

Inside were Oslo's group, who were all still cuffed for safety's sake. Oslo-san, Barrack-san, Nel-san, and another woman seemed to have regained their consciousness.

"How are you feeling?" [Ryouma]

"Your... that guy from... last week... ugh." [Woman]

The woman tried to stand up as she weakly spoke, but she lost strength in her legs and fell down.

"Don't force yourself." [Remiri]

Remiri-neesan quickly reacted and distributed the glasses of water Sebasu-san had prepared. It seems they haven't realized that they're safe now.

"...I thought I was dreaming." [Oslo]

"Looks like you saved us again." [Nell]

"Enough about that already. You've been cursed and your bodies are still weak, so just rest." [Remiri]

Oslo-san and Nell-san seemed to finally understand the situation, but Remiri-neesan just told them to rest. But Barrack-san ignored Remiri-neesan's orders, and he forced himself up.

“Thanks, but... we need to get word... to the guild as soon as possible.” [Barrack]

“You can’t even move without hurting. We’ll inform the guild ourselves, so don’t worry about that. Rather, how about telling us what happened instead?” [Ryouma]

After hearing their story, it turns out that that lich cursed them about two days ago and brought them to its base. And apparently, there are people other than them being controlled.

“There were a couple of times when I got my consciousness back... Usually when there’s no orders or when I try to go against the orders. And sometimes even in cases other than those... In the end, I couldn’t escape, but I did manage to see another person.” [Barrack]

“Before we were caught, we came across a two-man party being attacked by seven masked adventurers. We saw both groups when we were finally caught, but it turns out, all of them, the people being attacked and the people attacking, were being manipulated.” [Nell]

“We tried to save the two adventurers when we saw them under attack, but then that bony bastard came out of nowhere and attacked us.” [Oslo]

So there’s still at least 10 people still being manipulated...

In any case, our circumstances are really similar... A group of adventurers under distress as bait, then a surprise attack from the lich while in the middle of trying to help. Has that lich been doing this for a long time?

When I said that, Oslo-san agreed.

“That’s probably it. After all... we were also turned into decoys after falling into a trap.” [Oslo]

His face twisted and his nails buried into his hands as he his spoke with regret. The other four seemed to share his regret.

Did they...?

“...Did you end up baiting someone else before meeting us?” [Ryouma]

It's painful, but it's something that needs to be confirmed, so I steeled myself to ask.

No one said anything. Oslo-san just nodded his head.

“Do you remember how many members their party had?” [Ryouma]

“Five. There's no mistaking it.” [Oslo]

“I remember them too. Everyone was around the age of my daughter. I didn't want to, none of us did, but we couldn't resist the spell. After that, I don't know what happened to them.” [Nell]

“When we finally came to our senses, they were gone. None of us could remember what exactly happened, so there wasn't anything we could do. It would be great if they managed to escape, but... No, rather than worrying about them, there are still others alive! We have to send someone to- *cough!” [Barrack]

“Please have some water.” [Elia]

“S-Sorry...” [Barrack]

Having gotten too heated, Barrack-san ended up choking. Elia quickly gave him a glass of water to drink. Barrack-san realized how poorly he was behaving when she did, so he quickly changed his behavior, and then Elia went back quietly to a corner in the Dimension Home.

After that the other four girls stood alert, ready to provide water and a towel at a moment's notice. Remiri-neesan and I can cast healing magic and undo curses, but I'm sure they want to help too somehow.

Our discussion ended after I asked them about the location of the lich's headquarters. We then removed their cuffs and left Remiri-neesan and Elia's group in the Dimension Home to nurse them, while the other adults and I left.

The first one to leave was me, then Shiva-san, then Rheinbach-sama, and when the coast was clear, Sebasu-san finally stepped out.

No one can tell what's going on outside while inside a Dimension Home, so it's important to be cautious. Moreover, while the magic itself is convenient, should the caster die, the contents of the spell can never again be taken out.

So although unlikely, we made sure that the coast was clear before letting Sebasu-san step out. After all, if something were to happen to him, that's 17 people who won't be seeing the light of day again.

"I shall focus on casting magic, so please keep an eye out." [Sebasu]

We all nodded to Sebasu. There was a chance that the undead could appear at our destination, so the three of us, me, Rheinbach-sama, and Shiva-san, turned our backs to Sebasu-san as he invoked his space magic to teleport us.

CHAPTER 22

After returning to town through space magic, we split into two groups. Paying the magic jewel tax to the gatekeepers and reporting to the guild would take a lot of time, so the other group split off from us to bring the weakened to Nell's inn.

Fortunately, Oslo-san wasn't that weakened. He was up and running as soon as he got a drink of the potion Remiri-neesan gave me. He also personally asked to come as he was the leader of their group. I didn't mind since I also preferred having someone who actually saw what happened come with me to explain.

Passing through the clamor and food of the many restaurants and stalls, against the flow of people coming back home from work, we headed to the adventurer's guild. When we entered the guild, we saw a lot of people preparing to go home. It was that time of day.

I really don't want to do this, but it's an emergency. There's a B Rank magical beast out there and at least 10 people still kept prisoners. I have to report this even by force.

But just as I resolved myself to do so, and stepped toward that line of people preparing to go home...

"Oslo-san!" [???

The young female receptionist raised her voice, and all eyes gathered on me and Oslo-san. Then that young woman left her pose to wade through the crowd of adventurers and reach us.

"Are you alright? Where are your members?" [Female Receptionist]

"We ran into some problems, but we're all safe. We want to make an emergency report regarding what happened." [Oslo]

"I understand, please make the report inside... And this is?" [Female Receptionist]

“He’s the one who saved us.” [Oslo]

“I see. Then please come together.” [Female Receptionist]

After being brought to the quest room, the supervisor in charge of the reception greeted us. We explained everything to him – from Oslo’s group being caught until the part where brought them back to town.

“I understand the situation. Please wait a moment.” [Supervisor]

The man left for a moment, but he came back in less than 5 minutes with a rolled up paper in his hands.

“There were some points that concerned me. That lich was situated in a fortress surrounded by walls of stone, you say?” [Supervisor]

“And the size of the fortress is about 2 or 3 normal-sized houses. The walls seemed particularly well built.” [Oslo]

Does he know something?

The man abruptly spread the paper over the desk. It was a map. The man pointed to a certain area.

“Is this the fortress you’re talking about?” [Supervisor]

Oslo-san answered after thinking about it.

“...Most likely. We were searching around that area when we were caught, and we shouldn’t have walked that much before reaching the fortress.” [Oslo]

Oslo-san circled his finger on the area where he and his group were searching. The area the man was pointing to was slightly deeper into the canyon from the center, while Oslo-san and his group were almost right at the center. That area is near the area

I was frolicking in search of magic jewels... If so then the presence I felt then must have been that lich.

When I shared that experience with the other two men, they concluded that the supervisor's hypothesis was probably correct.

"Did you know there was a fortress around here?" [Ryouma]

When I asked that, the man made a pensive face.

"Back when we just started to find large numbers of magic jewels, the feudal lord in charge of this region sent an expedition to investigate the area. It was then that we found out that there was a base nearby."

"Was a base?" [Ryouma]

Past tense?

"An order was given to destroy that base so as to keep the undead from settling in it. I thought you might have been referring to a different place, so I wanted to confirm it."
[Supervisor]

The lich ran away as soon as its surprise attack failed. It won't start thinking of using the people it's caught to heal itself, right? The possibility is real though.

"Information on the enemy's base is a huge help. Thank you. The guild shall inform the adventurers on this matter as soon as possible. Is there anything else I can help you with?" [Supervisor]

It'll take some time to muster a force to help the prisoners. He probably won't be able to answer even if I ask him how long it would take... Oh, right.

"I have something else to report. A matter aside from the lich." [Ryouma]

“Let’s hear it then. Did something unusual occur?” [Supervisor]

“We stayed in the canyon for about a week. During that time I found five of the people in the ‘Missing Person List’ zombified. There’s nothing of particular note in the canyon aside from the unusually high number of undead. More interestingly, I found an odd fish during our stay in the canyon.” [Ryouma]

“The missing adventurers and a... fish? Those certainly are new information. Can you tell me the details?” [Supervisor]

“I don’t mind, but—” [Ryouma]

I took out the report on the fish and the missing people, and handed it to the supervisor.

“I’m sure you’re busy with everything going on, so I’ve taken the time to write everything here.” [Ryouma]

“You’re well prepared. Thank you for taking the time to write a written report.” [Supervisor]

The man seemed surprised when he saw the written report. Most adventurers reported orally; very few reported in writing. In fact, I’ve never seen anyone hand a written report.

But then again, all I really did was submit the writings I used to organize my thoughts that also happened to be a report... Anyway, let’s go ahead and submit those fish I caught as samples.

I took out the box filled with that fish from my Dimension Home, and was about to hand them. But because the man screamed upon seeing them, the guards of the guild entered, and a commotion ensued.

He was just taken aback by how weird the fish was, so the commotion was settled not long after.

It will take a while to decide how much the reward will be, so I won’t get my reward

until later.

After that we left the guild.

“Takebayashi-sama.” [Supervisor]

Or at least we were supposed to, but then the man stopped me and bowed deeply. Apparently, he wanted to thank me for saving Oslo’s group.

Oslo-san waited outside while I spoke with the man. We kept things short so as to not make Oslo-san wait too long. I found out that among the requests Oslo’s group had taken, some were from relatives who wanted to find their missing relatives but couldn’t because they didn’t know how to fight.

The request they’d posted were cheaper than other requests as they were mere search missions. Moreover, with the town brimming with magic jewels, there were lots of requests to dig out magic jewels that paid a lot, leaving low-paying search requests to rot on the postings.

This resulted in friction between those who wanted their relatives found and the adventurer’s guild. It was thanks to Oslo’s group that that issue was settled. If it weren’t for them, the guild would have suffered much losses.

“I’m also one of those people who posted a request. I am deeply grateful for their efforts.” [Supervisor]

So this man was one of their clients... After I thanked the man, I left the guild with Oslo-san.



Oslo-san led me to Nell-san’s inn. We’re supposed to meet Elia’s group anyway, and I’m also concerned about how the other members are doing. We walked briskly through the town, stopping at a house in the north-west part of town.

“Is this the inn?” [Ryouma]

The house was built in a similar fashion as those around it. The sort of fashion that made one wonder if it was built with the stones of Troll Canyon. It stood two-stories high and a sign was written above the door. It read: ‘Rufto Inn’. To the side of the door was another sign that indicated if there were rooms available. Now, I know this is rude, but frankly speaking, if it weren’t for the sign, I wouldn’t have been able to tell this house an inn. At most, I would’ve thought it a bigger house. There is an extension to the house, however. And a closer look shows that it’s longer than it appears, but that’s not something you can tell when looking at it from in front.

Opening the wooden door to enter the inn, an inverted L-shaped counter greeted us. There was no receptionist, so Oslo-san rang the small bell above the counter. I heard the sound of a door opening and closing from the stairs to the left of the counter. That must be an employee coming down to greet us.

It was then that it finally occurred to me. This inn was built much like a house. Even its interiors were decorated so, as the supposed reception area felt less like a hotel’s, and more the entryway of a simple house’s. I kept thinking of a hotel when I heard ‘inn’, but now that I’ve gone here, it feels a lot closer to a guesthouse. This is good too in its own way.

“Ah, Oslo-san. Sorry for making you wait.” [???

While I was caught up with my thoughts on the inn’s design, a slender man called out to Oslo-san. His eyes opened wide upon seeing me, and he quickly climbed down the stairs to hold my hand.

“You must be the person who saved my wife. Thank you! Thank you so much!” [???

The sudden turn of events left me mildly confused, but it didn’t take long for me to understand what was going on. Oslo-san further explained when I looked at him.

“I think you’ve figured it out already, but this man here is Nell’s husband.” [Oslo]

“Oh, pardon me. My name is Heckard, Nell’s husband. I believe you must be Takebayashi-sama? My wife and your friends have filled me in on the details. Truly, from the bottom of my heart, thank you, Takebayashi-sama.” [Heckard]

His smile was full of relief as he thanked me for the last time. The lich case was far from over, but seeing someone this happy, makes all that trouble of saving them worth it.

After that Oslo-san went to the room his members were staying, while I met up with Elia’s group who had gone here ahead of me. We sat in a corner of the guest room that was also being used as a dining hall to exchange information.

We decided to accept Heckard’s offer to stay at the inn, then we started to discuss our course of action regarding the lich.

“Obviously, we need to get rid of that lich as soon as possible.” [Shiva]

“I agree. We can’t leave a lich that’s using a curse of obedience walking around. All the more so when there are yet people under its control.” [Remiri]

The former knight-commander and a former royal court magician, both currently S Rank adventurers. But though they’ve long retired from their duties, the missions they took still focused on altruism than profit. I figured they wouldn’t let that lich off. Looks like I was right.

I turned to Rheinbach-sama and Sebasu-san next.

“Let me come too. We managed to save Oslo’s group just now thanks to the food and water we had, but they were definitely weakened. What more those people who are yet under the lich’s grasp? We need to save them before it’s too late. Let me come, I’ll be plenty of help.” [Rheinbach]

“Sorry for the trouble.” [Shiva]

“It’s fine.” [Rheinbach]

Rheinbach-sama and Shiva-san seemed to have some sort of tacit understanding.

“How about you, Ryouma-chan?” [Remiri]

“Of course, I’ll come.” [Ryouma]

If the four of them are going, then I’ll go too... Putting it that way might seem like I can’t think for myself, but there’s a reason behind it. The lich can use the spell, Hide, to erase its presence. Moreover, it has at the very least 10 people under its control. With those cards under its sleeves, attacking alone is foolish. After all, a surprise attack followed by a curse of obedience would be game over right there and then.

The grave slimes can’t absorb those humans the lich has control of either. The risk is really too high for me to go by myself.

...That being said though, we definitely can’t take Elia and the other girls with us.

We all turned our gazes to the young girls. They all tacitly understood what it was we were saying, and they all nodded. Although it was only for a short time, they did also face the lich, so it seems they could come to terms with it. It’s vexing, but there’s nothing else to it when you lack the strength.



Then the time for supper came, and other guests started arriving. Eyes started to gather on Remiri-neesan and Shiva-san, so we put off supper for another time.

“Ryouma-chan, can I have a moment with you?” [Remiri]

“Yes, what is it?” [Ryouma]

I was planning on passing the time feeding the shadow slimes, but then Remiri-neesan called out to me in front of the stairs. She invited me to her room. Looks like she wants to talk about something that can’t be said to others, so I put up a sound-concealing barrier too.

“You can talk now.” [Ryouma]

“Thank you, Ryouma-chan. Do you have the anti-curse magic tool with you?” [Remiri]

I still have the magic tool for Return Curse that I bought back when I started learning about curses in my Item Box, but...

“From your face, I suppose you have it but haven’t been using it lately, huh.” [Remiri]

“Right. It was fine back when I first bought it, but nowadays, it’s just better for me to use my own magic.” [Ryouma]

“I know. I saw you cast it myself.” [Remiri]

Ah, right.

“Then let’s get to the point... Would you be interested in a powerful magic tool?” [Remiri]

“A powerful magic tool? Considering who we’ll be fighting, of course I want one, but can we even procure such a tool?” [Ryouma]

Only a handful of magic tool artisans can create an anti-curse magic tool. On top of that, the nobles are constantly fighting for those few products, leading to exorbitant prices.

Even the magic tool I have was ordered by Serge-san, and while it’s effects were only somewhat on the high side, the price still reached 700,000 suits. There’s no way we could easily get something better than... Wait.

“You have one, don’t you?” [Ryouma]

“Nope. But there’s a chance to get one. With the five of us, that is.” [Remiri]

“You’re not thinking of something dangerous, right? Like something illegal...” [Ryouma]

“No worries on that end. But it will be a bit troublesome if the nobles or the magic tool

artisans catches wind of what we're doing. And besides, it's not guaranteed that we actually could get one." [Remiri]

"...In other words, it's fine as long as keep it a secret, huh." [Ryouma]

"Yes~ It'll be fine as long as no one finds out." [Remiri]

I'd rather not get involved with anything annoying, but if procuring such a tool means lowering the mission's risk, then...

"So, what's the plan?" [Ryouma]

Her response was...

CHAPTER 23

“We’ll need Kanan-chan’s help, since we’ll be making it together.” [Remiri]

When I asked Remir-neesan what her plan was, that was her response. Now, I know Kanan can imbue magic tools with other people’s magic, but...

“You know it won’t work unless she’s compatible with the person, right?” [Ryouma]

“I know. That’s why I told you we might not succeed. But you know, if it’s you, then I think it’s doable. I don’t have much of a basis for it, but you know that Kanan-chan can make a magic tool with Elia-chan, right?” [Remiri]

Right. Kanan did mention that the bracelet she’s using is a magic tool she created with Elia.

“Right.” [Ryouma]

“And this isn’t directly related, but among my coworkers back at the palace was a royal court magician who could create and maintain magic tools. According to that person, the first people who could use enchant magic was a child of god.” [Remiri]

The founder of enchantment is an otherworlder?

“Really!?” [Ryouma]

“That’s one explanation. Unfortunately, it wasn’t until many generation later that enchantment magic started to spread. There aren’t a lot of documents about that person, and his existence is apparently something closer to a rumor than fact. But there’s more to it...” [Remiri]

I listened closely to Remiri-neesan.

“As the story goes, it turns out that the child of god who might have been an enchanter

had a follower, who helped him create magic tools. As it turns out, that follower was also apparently a child of god.” [Remiri]

“The follower too?” [Ryouma]

“Right. But unlike his master who could only enchant, the follower was blessed with the power to use all sorts of magic. For the record, there are other stories too where there were two children of god in the same era.” [Remiri]

There was also that story about the otherworlder who became this country’s king and the otherworlder who became a hero. Two children of god, one era.

“Two possible children of god worked together to create a magic tool. And now someone with the talent and disposition like Kanan-chan was able to make one with Elia-chan who has a child of god’s blood running through her veins.

A method to create magic tools that can only work with another compatible person. Moreover, the requirements for that compatibility is exceedingly hard to meet. Don’t you think that the reason why it’s so hard to find someone compatible might be because it’s a method that could only work with another child of god?” [Remiri]

The logic... I can follow, but... When you think about it...

“The only people who can enchant are those who have the blood of an enchanter, right? I’m pretty sure I heard something like that before.” [Ryouma]

“Right! There’s that story too! The number of enchanters have been increasing lately, so it’s no surprise for nobles to start asking where they were born. The magic really might be inherited.” [Remiri]

“That is probably the case.” [Ryouma]

It might be worth trying out. But if that’s the case, then I might have to reveal my identity as a child of god.

“It wouldn’t be right to just ask her to try without any reason why I think it might succeed. And if we’re working together, we’ll have to discuss the risks too, or it’ll be

bad after we do create a magic tool.” [Ryouma]

If we’re doing it, then we might as well do it consensually.

“So what are you going to do?” [Remiri]

“I’ll tell her.” [Ryouma]

That was my conclusion after thinking about it.

“You sure?” [Remiri]

“If it was just someone you introduced to me, I’d refuse, but I know Kanan, so it’s alright. Let’s tell the other girls too. If it’s them, then I don’t mind. I trust them. And besides, Kanan is a horrible liar, so we might as well get this out of the way.” [Ryouma]

She might try to protect my secret, but she’s not really good at lying. And I’m sure Elia and the others would be curious if I ask her help. Of course, they won’t pursue the matter much if Kanan doesn’t want to talk, but then the atmosphere between them will become tense.

If it’s those girls, I’m sure it’ll be fine. Besides, Elia will find out about it one day anyway. The rest of her family already know about it.



After that we discussed up to how much we should talk about and what kind of magic to imbue the magic tool with. During that discussion, someone knocked hard on the door.

“What’s up?” [Ryouma]

“Finally!” [Kanan]

“We’ve been calling you since a while ago, so we thought you weren’t in.” [Michelle]

When I opened the door, Kanan and Michelle were standing right outside. I suppose it

was Kanan knocking?

“Sorry about that. We had a barrier up, so we couldn’t hear.” [Remiri]

Remiri-neesan said as she came up from behind.

“What in the world is a man and a woman doing in a small room with a sound-concealing barrier?” [Michelle]

“I hope you’re not thinking of anything strange. We were just discussing how to defeat the lich.” [Ryouma]

“Well it is you we’re talking about, so I suppose... That aside...” [Michelle]

“There aren’t a lot of people in the dining hall now, so one of the servants came to ask if we’re going to eat. It was looking pretty bad though.” [Kanan]

Looks like our talk lasted a lot longer than I thought. Hmm... Looking bad?

“People were pestering Shiva-san a while ago.” [Kanan]

“Word of the lich has apparently already gotten around, and lots of adventurers have started coming, asking Shiva-san to fight with them. Heckard tried to stop them, but they wouldn’t let up. In the end, the adventurers even started to cause a ruckus.” [Michelle]

So they called us just in case. The other three: Elia, Miyabi, and Riera apparently went to call Seabsu-san and Rheinbach-sama.

Now that they mention it, it sure is noisy downstairs.

Putting our talk for later, Remiri-neesan and I came downstairs, where a furious voice shook the inn.

“Enough!!!” [???

Uwo!? Who was that –Huh, Shiva-san? Wow, he looks mad.

“—Wanting to work with me is one thing, but causing trouble for the inn, uninvited, is not! And to think you would even raise your hand against a mere citizen! What is wrong with you!?” [Shiva]

Looking through the opening in the crowd of people, I saw Heckard-san bleeding from the corner of his mouth. I saw the servants help him back up before the opening closed.

From the attire these people are wearing, it seems everyone here is an adventurer. There’s twelve of them all-in-all. Shiva-san’s earlier yell seems to have left them as meek as lambs.

“B-but the enemy is a lich. That’s a B-Rank magical beast.” [Adventurer 1]

“Exactly! We need to get rid of it before anyone else gets hurt! That’s why we came here! To ask you to lend us your strength, so—” [Adventurer 2]

“I refuse. I’ve already explained why many times. Or do you still not understand?” [Shiva]

“You’re going with your friends, right!? Then let me come too! It’ll be better with more people!” [Adventurer 2]

Unfortunately, that didn’t last long, as some persistent adventurer lit the flame anew. That fire spread until it eventually reached me.

“Ah! That’s him! That’s the guy traveling with the former knight-commander!!” [Adventurer 3]

The man in front of the group did a double take when he saw me, then he yelled that out, causing the rest of the adventurers to turn toward me.

Damn. That baldy with his loose lips and that twisted timing... I ended up glaring at him because of that.

“Oi, you sure this is the guy?” [Adventurer 4]

“Wow, he’s young. I definitely have more experience than him.” [Adventurer 5]

“He probably has skill to show for since the former knight-commander is taking him along, but...” [Adventurer 6]

And now they’re saying whatever they want. Well, it is true I’m not even past 20, so I am pretty young for a B Rank adventurer—

“You said you have people you’re going with, and it turns out to be some kid! You’re better off with someone like me than that!” [Adventurer 7]

That one sneered when he looked at me, then he started to try and convince Shivasan.

“Oi! You!” [Adventurer 8]

“Don’t try to get an inch over us!” [Adventurer 9]

“We’re definitely better than that guy—” [Adventurer 10]

“We have more experience than some greenhorn kid—” [Adventurer 11]

The moment one of them made a move, the rest followed. I ran into people like these a lot when I was under the influence of the demon king’s fragment, and I’ve sort of gotten used to dealing with them.

” ‘What did you say about me?’ ” [Ryouma]

“Eek!?” [Adventurer 12]

My voice, brimming with magic power, blew away the fight from the noisy adventurers. And their bodies shook as if cold water had been poured over them. Some of them fell down and some turned around, their faces pale.

Ah~ ... Was that a bit much? Perhaps just the pressure or the Cursed Song would have

been enough, but eh... whatever. If I don't go this far, the noisy ones among them won't shut up, and they won't listen. Shiva-san's earlier yell didn't work either, so it should be fine. Besides, it's not like they're dying or anything.

"You people are causing quite the ruckus, you know? Do you perhaps need help or something?" [Ryouma]

"N-No..." [Adventurer 1]

"T-That's..." [Adventurer 2]

"From what I've gathered, it seems you'll be taking my place against the lich?" [Ryouma]

My voice, brimming with magic power, fanned their fears as I slowly, yet carefully interrogated them. Though terrified, they tried to justify their earlier actions.

"D-Don't get mad. We were desperate, you know. We just wanted to share fortune with the knight-commander." [Adventurer 3]

"R-Right. We just slipped a bit. Sorry if it seems like we were making a fool out of you." [Adventurer 4]

"Seems? Oh, I'm fairly sure you were – in fact – making a fool out of me." [Ryouma]

I spoke more and more as I pointed out various, petty points. And when I'd finally pushed them into a corner, Shiva-san spoke.

"Unfortunately, you people just aren't strong enough for us to trust our backs to." [Shiva]

Those words blew the last of the ebbing ember, and the adventurers all apologized. Heckard-san warned them that the guards would be involved should something similar happen again, and they all left, afraid. Surprisingly, most of those people weren't even guests.

We let out a breath of relief when the last person finally left.

“Dear guests, please accept my apology for this disturbance.” [Heckard]

“It’s not your fault, Heckard-dono. The one who should be apologizing is me, since I’m the one who caused this whole mess.” [Shiva]

“Thank you, hearing that puts me at ease. I shall prepare your supper then, please just wait for a moment.” [Heckard]

“Before that we should heal you. ‘Heal’ ” [Ryouma]

Heckard-san apologized to Shiva-san and me. I healed him before letting him go. His lips were cracked and his face was swelling a bit, so a single cast of Heal should immediately fix him up. He thanked me before leaving to prepare our supper.

“That was a mess.” [Ryouma]

“It happens a lot. Sorry for getting you involved.” [Shiva]

“I don’t really mind. I’m also used to it. So, this happens a lot?” [Ryouma]

“This bad is rare, but yes. People who want me as their master, people who want to join my party, all sorts.” [Shiva]

Remiri-neesan joined in the conversation while Shiva-san was talking. Behind her were Kanan and Michelle. Further behind were Sebasu-san, Rheinbach-sama and the three girls who called them.

Just where and what were these people doing all this time?

“It would have been bad if they saw me too, so I used Hide to run away. Sorry for leaving everything to you.” [Remiri]

So that’s what. Well, they did react like that just seeing me.



After that we sat ourselves at a corner of the now empty dining hall, and talked about what had happened before we arrived. It turns out everything was just a series of unfortunate events.

Shiva-san had gone to the dining hall ahead of us, only to end up meeting an adventurer who had forgotten his belongings, who then turned out to be one of Shiva's diehard fans. That was all it took to start a fire apparently, as people suddenly started crowding him, some of which were the people who wanted to join his party. It seems Shiva-san and Remiri-neesan being here has already become a rumor in the town.

According to Shiva-san, most of those pushy people weren't actually B Rank in ability, but C Rank. And what they really wanted to do was to fight with Shiva-san, defeat the lich, and perhaps continue to journey together and gather achievements, so they could eventually be promoted.

Apparently, stuff like this started happening ever since Shiva became an adventurer. Normally, he just refuses, but the group this time just wouldn't take no for an answer. And eventually, the fans and the people wanting to join with Shiva started arguing, one of which started accusing the other of just wanting to bask in Shiva-san's glory.

Heckard-san tried to stop them, but being a lone man, who was also weaker than them, he was pushed aside. This led to Shiva-san to finally lose his temper, and he yelled at them.

"I don't mind grouping up with someone, but people like those are no good." [Shiva]

"Someone understanding would be nice." [Remiri]

"Fame has its own problems too, I see." [Ryouma]

Rheinbach-sama suddenly remembered something, so he asked me.

"Speaking of which, Ryouma-kun, just how many of your slave demons can participate in the lich hunt?" [Rheinbach]

"There's one mimic slime and emperor grave slime. There's a thousand for the metal and iron slimes. A hundred for the scavenger slimes. 10 for the shadow slimes and the other elemental slimes.

In total, if you count the emperor grave slimes as 10,000 grave slimes, then that's 12,231 slimes all-in-all. Oh, and there's the 8 rimel birds." [Ryouma]

My Dimension Home is already full of slimes, so I left the sticky slimes and acid slimes to watch the house back in Gimuru.

I left Rai too because of the narrow road and the stiff cliffs, as he wouldn't be able to move much. Which is why the number ended up becoming like that. It would be great if I could learn the advanced spell, Another World, soon.

After that supper came, so we put off all the gloomy and dangerous stories for later. Our supper consisted of bread, stew, salad, and a big, fat, delicious steak. To make things even better, we could eat as much as we wanted.

CHAPTER 24

After a hearty meal fit for an adventurer's inn, I waited for Remiri-san and the rest of the girls in my room. We could not talk about the magic tools there in the dining hall, so we had to wait until after when they could speak in private to bring it up.

After waiting for a while, I heard the footsteps of six people approaching. They were here.

“Ryouma-san, are you in?” [Elia]

When the footsteps stopped, the person behind the door knocked four times, then I heard Elia's voice. I invited them all in as I opened the door. There were six of them all-in-all, and with me, there were seven of us in the room. That's a lot of people for just one room, so it came as no surprise that we all felt cramped. To make things more comfortable, we decided to use my Dimension Home instead. No one can hear what we're talking about inside and there'll be way more space to move around in too.

...Though it's certainly not that spacious anymore.

“Wow...” [Miyabi]

“Like 80 to 90 percent of this whole place is slime.” [Riera]

There was a hint of both shock and admiration when they muttered that.

Incidentally, the remaining 10% of the place was taken up by preserved food, tools for making medicine, weapons, and armors.

“Anyway, let's go sit somewhere.”

I ordered the slimes to make way for us, then I distributed floor cushions made out of

the fluff slime's fluff for us to sit on. After that I made tea for everyone, and Remiri-neesan and I talked to the girls about why we think I might be able to make a magic tool with Kanan. And of course, we told them that I'm a child of god.



“—And that about sums it up.” [Remiri]

“...” [The Girls]

Sensing the atmosphere around me and Remiri-neesan, the girls kept quiet despite the surprising news of my being a child of god. They kept quiet until the end, not interjecting even once.

“Umm... If there's something I can do to help, then by all means please!” [Kanan]

The first one to break the silence was Kanan.

“You sure?” [Ryouma]

“You did go out of your way to tell me everything, and I also want to help defeat the lich, and... More than anything, if there's anything that might allow me to create a magic tool, then by all means... And while I'm surprised to hear that Ryouma-kun is a child of god...” [Kanan]

Kanan looked to the other girls sitting nearby, and they all nodded with a smile on their faces.

“We're surprised, of course. But when you think about it all makes sense.” [Elia]

“Like how many slimes you have contracted or how strong you are, and all those crazy stuff you do. But when it turns out that you're actually a child of god, then it finally clicks like 'Ah! So, that's why!'” [Michelle]

“Besides, we've all gotten used to it by now. You being out of the norm, that is.” [Riera]

It was a bit disappointing that they weren't all that surprised, but Remiri-neesan was

just, 'That makes everything easier then,' and pushed us to hurry up and try make that magic tool.

"I'll be in your care, then." [Ryouma]

"Same here." [Kanan]

I asked what we needed to do. And it turns out that we just have to prepare the weapon to imbue my magic into, and then for me to use my magic.

"Since you're doing this to subjugate a monster, then I recommend using an accessory. It won't get in the way of your hands, and you can attach it easily to your body." [Kanan]

"Then let's go with that." [Ryouma]

So I took out the ring and the necklace I made from working on my engraving skills from my Item Box.

"To raise the quality, we should use something that was made with silver or gold." [Kanan]

"Silver and gold, huh... If you're just looking for a better conduit of magic power, then I have some mythril or orihalcum.

I had some left over material after forging some weapons with them, so I used them to make three simple rings. When I showed those rings to Kanan, she sighed.

"The best material there's ever been. But you know it would be nice if you refrained from taking out something like that like you would a piece of candy, because I'm seriously starting to question my common sense." [Kanan]

Apparently, the reason she suggested to use gold or silver was because magic tool artisans normally can't get any mythril or orihalcum.

“Can we use these for our first magic tool?” [Ryouma]

“No problem.” [Kanan]

Magic tools are usually referred to as just magic tools as if they were all made the same way, but there are actually various ways to make one. The method we’re going to use this time is the easiest and most popular method.

“Let’s put the mythril and orihalcum for later, and start out with something simple.”
[Kanan]

Kanan appeared nervous as she lifted up the gold ring among the accessories I’d taken out. She placed the ring on the palm of her right hand, and brought her hand toward me.

“When I give the signal, use the water magic ‘Water’ over the ring.” [Kanan]

Magic power began to emanate from her left hand as she said that. That magic power gathered into a lump of magic over the ring, then a part of it stretched and wrapped itself around the ring. It didn’t feel ominous or anything, but it looked like a curse. Looking around, Elia and the other girls looked at Kanan with seemingly praying eyes. Then the signal came.

” ‘Water’ ” [Ryouma]

I used water just as she told me, but no water appeared over the ring.

“The magic power is...” [Ryouma]

I could feel Kanan’s magic power wrapping around mine, stopping the spell just before it invoked. And as that magic power passed through Kanan’s, it flowed into the ring. It was just like a funnel pouring medicine into a vial.

When my magic power made contact with the ring, a blue light began to emanate from the ring, and it gradually grew brighter.

It was at that moment that I realized that the founder of enchantment was truly an otherworlder. Because that light was the same light I saw whenever I went to the divine realm or came back, or when I used alchemy. Did some god make enchantment too? And did the otherworlder anger the gods? Because I can't imagine them including some demerit of being unable to use any magic other than enchantment.

As my thoughts began to digress, the light emanating from the ring sparkled beautifully. With a face full of resolve, Kanan put the ring on her right index finger, and allowed her magic power to flow into it. When she did, a small amount of water appeared, which she stopped with her left hand.

"It worked! It really worked!" [Kanan]

"Then we should be able to make an anti-curse magic tool, right?" [Ryouma]

"Yes!" [Kanan]

Great! With this we can guarantee a safe hunt!

Just finding someone like Elia with whom she could create a magic tool with was plenty miraculous. She did not think she would find another such person. After that we created ten more magic tools out of the spells, Return Curse and Dispel, creating enough for everyone.



"Thank you, Kanan-chan." [Remiri]

"I'm glad I was able to help. And more than anything, I'm glad I was able to touch a material I've only seen in books. It was a great experience. So, thank you!" [Kanan]

After Kanan bowed deeply, our business for the day was over.

"Then let's go back and rest. Make sure to keep all of this a secret, alright? It would be

troublesome it the other nobles caught wind of Ryoum-chan and Kanan-chan being able to mass produce the otherwise rare magic tools.” [Remiri]

Elia and the others made a stern expression as they again promised to protect the secret. Satisfied with their response, Remiri-neesan hugged the one with the grimmest expression of them all, Riera, and patted Elia on the head as she told them not to worry.

“It’ll be fine. Shiva-chan and Rheinbach-chan know about this too, so if anyone ever asks you about those magic tools, you can just bring up the name of the Jamil Family, mine, or Shiva-chan’s, and say that you don’t know anything since you were just given the tools. As for the details, just make up a story you all know, like the tools being a family heirloom or something.”

The girls’ faces lightened up when Remiri-neesan reassuringly said that. She tends to be really touchy, but that reassuring atmosphere of hers is really something.

After that we left the Dimension Home, and all the girls, including Remiri-neesan, went back to their own rooms.



“Fuu...” [Ryouma]

With everyone gone, there was nothing left to do. I could just go and sleep like this, but I don’t feel sleepy at all. Trying to forcefully sleep at times like these is usually a waste of time... I wonder if there’s something I could do to pass the time.

It’s not that late. The early ones are probably at bed already, but people who work at bars are still working around this time. I don’t really feel like going to a bar though... Oh, speaking of which, Heckard-san just left after he said he would prepare our supper, and we never got to talk about the reparations for the trouble caused by the adventurers. There’s nothing else to do, so I might as well ask.

After making sure that I was wearing clothes fit for going outside, I filled a small bag with money, and left the room. When I got downstairs, I saw Heckard-san working at the books in the counter by the entrance.

“Heckard-san.” [Ryouma]

“! Ah, Takebayashi-sama. Is there anything I can help you with?” [Heckard]

“Actually, I wanted to talk about— What happened to your cheeks?” [Ryouma]

Heckard-san didn’t notice me until I called out to him. Then because the room was dark – the only source of light being some candles – I didn’t notice it right away, but there was a compress plastered onto one of his cheeks.

I healed his wounds earlier already, and the side it’s plastered on is the other side, so that shouldn’t be it.

“Could it be that when you got hit, you—” [Ryouma]

“No, please don’t misunderstand.” [Heckard]

Heckard-san replied in a panic.

“My wife did this...” [Heckard]

“Your wife? You mean Nell-san?” [Ryouma]

“When she found out what happened, she told me I should have called her. She says it’s the duty of the wife to stop quarrels between adventurers.” [Heckard]

Ahh... So that’s why. Well, Heckard-san does seem pretty weak.

“Also, please don’t worry about the reparations. This inn is frequented by adventurers, so we’re no stranger to such quarrels. Besides, I was the one who asked everyone to stay here. I couldn’t possibly ask you to pay.” [Heckard]

“I see...” [Ryouma]

He beat me to the point.

“Gardak-sama also dropped by a while ago, and he gave me permission to put up a sign that says ‘The inn where the former knight-commander stayed’ in exchange for the payment. That’s more than I could ask for.” [Heckard]

So that’s how Shiva dealt with the situation after seeing money wasn’t going to be accepted. I’m not sure how much of an effect that will have, but it should be akin to a really famous celebrity giving his sign for the store to show off.

It wouldn’t do to force the issue, but I think I can give them something else to thank them.

But then just as I was about to open my Dimension Home, I realized something. Won’t they just end up hating me if I actually give them that fish?

As that thought was running through my mind, Heckard-san spoke.

“Is something the matter?” [Heckard]

“Huh? Oh, I was thinking of giving Nell-san this delicious fish I caught from the canyon, but it looks pretty bad appearance-wise, so I was wondering whether it would just cause you trouble.” [Ryouma]

“A fish, you say?” [Heckard]

When I said that, Heckard-san showed interest.

“Do you like fishes?” [Ryouma]

“Yes. I used to eat a lot when I was still peddling. I’d love to eat fresh fish again, actually.” [Heckard]

“It’s fresh, but it looks... weird.” [Ryouma]

“If you don’t mind, then I’d love to have a taste.” [Heckard]

“Are you sure? Everyone I showed it to before has hated it.” [Ryouma]

“I’m sure I won’t mind a little ugly on the outside. I’ve always been good with stuff like that.” [Heckard]

Heckard-san led me into the kitchen, where I took out the fish from my Dimension Home.

“This is...” [Heckard]

When Heckard-san saw the fish, his eyes opened wide.

He’s not eating it, is he?

“But, no...” [Heckard]

Is what I thought at first, but then it seems he’s really scrutinizing the fish.

“Are you alright?” [Ryouma]

“Yes, I’ve seen plenty of stuff like this when I was a kid.” [Heckard]

He’s seen a fish like this before? When I asked him that, he happily answered. Apparently, when he was a kid, there were plenty of fishes like this one in one of the caves of Troll Canyon.

Troll Canyon did not have a lot of undead back then, and Heckard-san worked as a garbage man, who would frequently go to the canyon to throw away the trash. That cave was near the place where he and his coworkers threw the trash, so his seniors would usually take him there.

“If you go deep into the cave, you’ll find a place with a vast pool of water, where you can find fishes like this one. There’s just one thing though. Back then, I’m pretty sure those fishes didn’t have such sharp teeth, and I’m also pretty sure they were really small. About this much.” [Heckard]

Heckard-san showed the size with his right hand's index and thumb finger. It was really small. At most, it would only be as big as the palm of one's hands.

"That sure is small." [Ryouma]

"Indeed. And there were so many of them crawling under the water that you couldn't see them. We got chills when we saw that back at that cave.

The kids nowadays or the people that came from elsewhere don't know about that though. The cave itself wasn't dangerous, as there weren't any beasts back then and it had only one path, so you couldn't even get lost, but kids frequented it. And so, for some reason, some parents thought it too dangerous to let children frolic at a place like that, so they sealed up the entrance.

I was one of the kids who played there when I felt like playing adventurer, so I remember the place well." [Heckard]

So that sort of thing happens even in another world.

After that Heckard-san taught me how to prepare and eat the fish.

"I'll be going then." [Ryouma]

"Please have a good night's rest. Not just today, but if possible, please visit us whenever you drop by this town. I'll do my best to ensure that we prioritize you." [Heckard]

I couldn't help but ask when I noticed how good he was treating us.

"Is it really alright to treat us so favorably?" [Ryouma]

"Yes. I cannot thank you all enough for what you've done for us. I couldn't take it if my wife left me too." [Heckard]

Too? Oh, right! Nell-san went with Oslo-san because her daughter went missing. Obviously, her daughter would also be Heckard's daughter.

I didn't know how to reply to his smile, so I just bowed and left.

I've only seen that lich once, but I'll definitely defeat him.

Silently, I resolved myself to defeat the lich.

It's the only thing I can do for them.

CHAPTER 25

The next day.

By the time it was afternoon, the five of us each were riding on the back of an ignis dragon with 8 rimel birds leading in front.

We would be reaching the fortress where the lich was supposed to be in less than five minutes. I thought it would take us longer to be honest. We're not going as fast as we could, as we're being wary of any possible surprise attacks, but the ignis dragon and the rimel birds are still so fast.

We specifically picked out a time unfavorable to the undead. This morning after readying our equipment, we had a meeting, then we left right after an early breakfast, but I didn't think we would actually arrive in less than an hour.

I'm grateful for my allies. Their fire and wind magic whenever we encountered a battle was invaluable.

Moreover, I hear Rheinbach-sama has a magical beast under him that excels at detecting enemies. It's called assassin snake. With its help we'll be able to find where the victims are. An excellent tool both for ambushing and defending against ambushes.

We tested the magic tool I created with Kanan before leaving, and we found out that it'll break after extended use, but it's newly built, so it probably won't fail us during some crucial moment. At least unless it gets destroyed.

"Oh?" [Shiva]

The fortress is nowhere to be seen, but the ignis dragons have already started to descend. Rheinbach-sama seems to have ordered them to. Did something happen?

Upon landing I asked Shiva-san if something happened.

“The ignis dragons saw the fortress on alert. It looks like some adventurers have attacked ahead of us. There were also two living wyverns and the corpse of a large bird-type magical beast you don’t normally see around here. A saddle was attached on both of the wyverns, so an adventurer must’ve been controlling them. The area surrounding the fortress is crawling with undead, so the lich is definitely in the fortress.” [Shiva]

“It’s common for a lich to use the undead, but to think it could also use wyverns.” [Rheinbach]

“If it can control slave demons too, then the beasts on our side might end up under its control.” [Remiri]

“High-ranked magical beasts and magical beasts with a lot of magic power have a natural resistance against contracts and curses, but yes, they might still end up controlled anyway.” [Rheinbach]

It seems the reason Rheinbach-sama had us land was to discuss whether to continue with our plan or not.



We discussed a bit after that, and in the end, we decided to revise the plan we made this morning.

The original plan was to split into two groups. One land and one air. With me, my slimes, Shiva-san, and Sebasu-san in the land group, while Rheinbach-sama and his ignis dragons would fight from the air with Remiri-neesan and the rimel birds.

It was a plan we originally came up with in case the lich tried to run away by flying again, so this time we revised it to prioritize dealing with the wyverns.

The slave demons would be fine as long as we found the lich first, and not give him the leeway to cast the Curse of Obedience. As for the undead, the grave slimes should be able to handle them. I’m sure not even the lich would have the magic power to try and usurp control over a horde of more than 10,000 slimes.

After making those changes to our plan, we rode on the ignis dragons, and once again made way for the fortress.



After flying for a while, a cliff that had been roughly leveled to create a crossroad came to view. At the center was an open space shaped like a deformed circle, outside of which was a wall that only reached up to one's hips. Beyond that wall were the castle walls, and then past that was a clumsily built one-story structure.

The walls were made from the stones of the cliff. The stones used were not uniform, and each and every single one of them were littered with earth and sand all over. In contrast, the gate on the castle walls was cleanly built, and the undead could enter in and out as its two doors opened outwards.

It's time...

In that tense atmosphere, Rheinbach-sama gave the signal to land, and those of us in the land group landed in one of the paths of the crossroad.

The unfortunate undead in the landing zone were either roasted by the dragons or squashed upon landing, while the undead that didn't get killed, sluggishly ran away from the place.

Good! They're not attacking us!

I quickly unfastened the metal fixtures needed to ride the dragons, and got off. Everyone else aside from me, the dragons and the rimel birds included, were tensed and extremely wary.

I took out the slimes from my Dimension Home, instantly filling the road extending to the fortress.

“Go!” [Ryouma]

As soon as I gave the command, the iron and metal slimes jumped out to lead the charge, with the grave slimes following from behind. Among the slimes were also 120 magic-using slimes that were covered in metal slimes. The mimic slime was behind me, transformed in my figure, and equipped with an iron slime katana.

As the horde of slimes pushed on, they turned into a wave of force that gradually took down the slow undead that couldn't run in time as they made way for the fortress.

When we neared the fortress—

“I found some survivors! There's three of them in front!” [Rheinbach]

Rheinbach-sama found some of the survivors, and he pointed them out from above. In front of me stood three men with expressionless faces just like Oslo-san and his group. They cut a road through the undead as they made their way toward us. When they got past the undead, they started cutting the iron slimes at the lead. When Sebasu-san saw that, he said.

“They're attacking everything.” [Sebasu]

I don't know what order they got, but they're attacking the zombies, who should be their allies, all the while, also attacking the slimes... But this isn't really the time to be wondering.

“Sebasu-san.” [Ryouma]

“It's ready.” [Sebasu]

We decided beforehand to throw the survivors into Sebasu-san's Dimension Home after catching them, so I checked with Sebasu-san if he was ready.

After hearing his response, I ordered the slime to open a path. Then I ran for the adventurers.

CHAPTER 26

“Kahyui!” [Mind Controlled Adventurer]

With an incomprehensible shout, one of the adventurers brandished his sword, and slashed down in a straight line. But I kept running at full speed, reaching up to his chest before he could fully slash down, and landed a blow onto his open side with my fist clad in poison magic.

The man bent into a < shape before falling to the ground and convulsing.

As soon as he fell, two swords had reached for me from behind the now fallen man, but turning on my left heel, I easily avoided them. At the same time, I was able to grab the wrist and arm of the man who came at me from my left. Slightly stooping, I placed his elbow over my shoulder, and broke his posture as I took him from the back. Then as I stretched my legs, I pushed all of my weight onto the man, pushing his dominant arm opposite the direction it normally bent. The pain too great, the man had no choice but to let go of his sword, but I kept going until I clearly felt his bone snap. Then I kicked him toward Sebasu-san and Shiva-san before turning to face the next adventurer.

This one came at me from right in front. He slashed down diagonally, and in response, I stepped forward, and took his arm, taking it all the way to throw him on his back, where I landed the finishing blow.

No more adventurers came after that, but when we reached the circular open space something happened.

“Are they planning on holing up?” [Shiva]

There were scores of undead, but just when we thought they would all come hording out of the fortress, the gate suddenly shut itself tight. And the undead that did get out before the gate closed, only stood there to protect the gate. I also noticed the two

wyverns flying in the sky, but that was Rheinbach-sama's job. And he left with his two ignis dragons as soon as he saw them.

"Leave the skies to me! The rest of the surviving adventurers are in the fortress!!"
[Rheinbach]

Like that Rheinbach-sama set off to fight with the wyverns... It's more like a game of tag though... With the wyverns' lives on the line.

Anyway, let's get to work. With this turn of events, the best course of action would be...

"Shiva-san, Sebasu-san." [Ryouma]

"Right." [Shiva]

"Please leave it to us." [Sebasu]

Leaving Shiva-san and Sebasu-san to stand watch, the slimes entered the open area, and spread out into a fan as I ordered them to clear the undead.

Then I used my earth magic to create a pillar of stone as thick as a log, with one end a slightly rounded stake and the other end flat. I attached handles to the center, and fortified the stake part with the construction magic, Hardening, then further reinforced the whole thing with ki.

We've already considered that the enemy might try to close the gate and hole up, so we thought up a plan during the meeting. According to Shiva-san, the best response in a scenario like this is none other than a battering ram. This was the best tool we could use considering our lack of man power and time.

"It's ready!" [Ryouma]

"Good! Do it just like we planned!" [Shvia]

As Shiva-san said that, he stepped forward, and fired off a spell of wind magic toward

the area in front of the slimes.

” ‘Storm Cutter’ !” [Shiva]

The raging wind blew countless blades into the surroundings, wreaking havoc upon the undead as they were minced to pieces. Even the fence and the castle walls didn’t come out unscathed. By the time the storm of blades started to settle, over half of the undead were gone.

This was where we came in. We cut down the remaining undead to cut open a path, while Sebasu-san protected our back as he followed from behind. Remiri-neesan also supported us from above, so it didn’t take us long before we finally reached the gate.

Now!!

Having calculated the exact moment when the undead wouldn’t be there to stop me, I overtook Shiva-san, and used all of my strength to ram the battering ram into the gate!

The giant rock of a stake slammed into the gate of the fortress, and the sound of something being crushed filled the area along with the sound of something creaking, yet only a crack at most was left upon the fortress’ gate. But I already knew just one blow wouldn’t be enough.

” ‘Rocket Punch’ !!” [Ryouma]

Gathering magic into a lump, I slammed that great power into the flat part of the battering ram to propel the ram forward. With my shoulder in place of the stand, the stake slammed into the gate a second time, just like an improvised pile bunker.

Again the sound of creaking and crushing resounded as the battering ram pierced the gate. I don’t know whether the hinges were the first to break, but the gate slammed open, and the undead on the other side came flying as the battering ram penetrated into the fortress.

“Good!” [Shiva]

Shiva-san entered as soon as the gate broke open to cut down the undead. And I followed after him along with Sebasu-san, while the slimes split into two groups. One half dealt with the undead outside, while the other half dealt with those inside.

But just as we were approaching the building where the adventurers were...

“Strange...” [Ryouma]

“You think so too?” [Shiva]

“Yes.” [Ryouma]

The slimes were enough to deal with the undead, so it didn't matter even when they tried to chase us. What's weird is that the place seemed too quiet. Neither the lich nor the mind controlled adventurers have made an appearance, yet there didn't seem to be any traps in sight either. Even though we caused such a large ruckus breaking the gate like that...

Not having to face much resistance is great, but on the other hand, it makes it seem more likely for there to be a trap, so we can't just carelessly enter the building.

Just as I was thinking that—

“GUoON!” [Wyvern]

The death throes of one of the two wyverns resounded high up in the skies. The both of them were roasted well done by the ignis dragons. And apparently the other one couldn't even so much as scream in its last moments. As the two wyverns fell from the sky, they crashed into the castle walls, tumbling down into the ground as they left a mark upon the walls they sought to protect.

Then it happened...

“!!!” [Ryouma, Shiva, Sebasu]

I was not lax. I was carefully paying attention to all of our surroundings, but at that moment, something still managed to grab my legs. When I looked down, what I saw was the white bone of an arm. The hand of a skeleton was for some reason sprouted from the ground. But that was not all, for there was an uncountable number of undead from within the fortress that – in no time at all – suddenly managed to surround us.

Ugh! Disgusting! Where are they coming from!?

I spat bitterly in my mind, but I didn't forget to react. Light magic clad around my legs to disperse the skeleton's arm wrapped around it. Shiva-san and Sebasu-san were also caught by their feet, but they managed to deal with the skeletons easily too.

“He's on the roof! 'Light Shot' !!” [Remiri]

As we looked up, we saw the lich on the rooftop battling with Remiri-neesan.

“Fall back!” [Shiva]

” ‘Water Cutter’ ” [Sebasu]

” ‘Holy Flame Carpet’ ” [Ryouma]

We would only be in danger if we kept this up, and if things turned for the worse, we might even find ourselves caught. So I followed Shiva's command, and casted my magic along with Sebasu-san, then we all used our respective weapons to cut open a path out through the hordes of undead. I've already ordered the slimes beforehand to protect the gate in case of a situation like this, so—

Why!? Did the lich do this too?

When we reached the fortress gate, the gate that should've been destroyed was standing there without a scratch, almost as if the time had been wound back.

CHAPTER 27

With no time to deal with the gate that should have been destroyed, we huddled together at the center of the slime's encirclement and battled the undead.

We struck them dead one after another, but they just kept coming no matter how many we killed. In fact, it felt like there more of them now. I know it's a fantasy world here, but this is just crazy. An endless zombie mission? Give me a break. We're somehow holding up thanks to the slimes, but this is still the first time I've been pushed to my back by sheer number alone since coming to this world.

...What's going on outside? The mimic slime should be there...

Linking my senses with the mimic slime battling outside, I found out that the slimes have overwhelmed the undead there. It looks like the undead are only spawning from inside the castle.

While I was relieved to know that the monsters were only spawning inside, some roam weapons in the shapes of hammers or spears came flying at me. I promptly shot them down with light magic, but at this rate, there won't be an end to this!

"The undead don't seem to be spawning outside. Shall we retreat for now?" [Ryouma]

"At this rate, we'll just end up exhausting our strength and magic." {Shiva}

"Indeed, regrouping with the slimes outside seems to be our best bet." [Sebasu]

Seeing our anti-air group doing well as they battled the lich in the skies, we opened the gate and went out with the slimes.

Fortunately, the gate didn't end up having some weird power that kept us from opening it, and we were able to easily open it from inside. I erected a pillar of stone to keep the gate open before we left. We didn't bother destroying it anymore since it seems it would just get fixed anyway.

The undead chased after us, and though the slime numbers have doubled, the battle seemed like it would still continue. But then when we got far enough, pillars of fire rained from the sky around the castle gate.

“Uuu...”

The wind took with it the heat of the flames as it blew the rising smoke and spread the smell of scorched and rotting flesh. I couldn't help but frown upon getting a whiff of that, then a voice called out to us.

“Is everyone alright?” [Remiri]

It was Remiri-neesan, who had been battling the lich. Afterwards, Rheinbach-sama flew to where we were as well.

“What happened to the lich?” [Ryouma]

“We couldn't kill it. It was really tricky, and it managed to run into the building.” [Remiri]

“It wasn't for naught. It turns out that lich isn't very strong in a straight up fight. The only thing it's good at is backstabbing and running away. It can't use anything other than dark magic too.” [Rheinbach]

Weak in a straight up fight... huh. That's not something you hear a lot. But if that's the case, then...

“The adventurers that attacked ahead of us were probably caught.” [Shiva]

As the billowing wind scattered the rising smoke, Shiva-san solemnly looked toward the castle gates. And out of the fire and the smoke did the undead appear, seemingly unperturbed, as if nothing at all had happened.

There's no way there's really no end to them, right? They must have a limit.

"This is a problem... Does everyone still have magic to spare?" [Ryouma]

My magic is fine, but I should drink some magic recovery potions just to be safe. The others also drank some before the undead came. As for the slimes... Well, they seem to be alright.

"Now what? At this rate, we'll take up too much time." [Remiri]

"My dragons could just cook them all, but we should save the surviving adventurers first." [Rheinbach]

We might have to abandon them if the situation turns for the worse, but for now, we have to prioritize saving them, as we still haven't been pushed that badly yet. The undead aren't strong, but they're really annoying.

To begin with, just where is all that undead coming.....Huh?

After having gotten some distance and seeing the way the undead appeared, it suddenly felt like I've seen something similar before... Ahh!

"I've got it!" [Ryouma]

"W-What is it all of the sudden?" [Remiri]

That moment of eureka ended up surprising Remiri-neesan, bringing the attention of the other three to me.

"I was wondering why the way the undead appeared felt similar, and I finally realized that it's because it's exactly the same with the grave slimes." [Ryouma]

The other four became thoughtful.

“Now that you mention it, it does seem like it.” [Sebasu]

“And that would also explain where all those undead were hiding, but...” [Remiri]

“Even if there is a magical beast with a similar ability, the question is where?” [Shiva]

“Honestly, I can’t see anything but undead.” [Rheinbach]

It was here that I shared something I thought of.

“But what if that entire fortress is that magical beast?” [Ryouma]

“...The gate we destroyed was fixed after all. And there is precedence for objects turning into magical beasts, like the roam weapons for example.” [Sebasu]

“It just might be then.” [Remiri]

We all looked toward the fortress.

“We can find out for sure if we use ‘Monster Identify’. Remiri, I’m going to approach the fortress. Back me up.” [Rheinbach]

“Gotcha. We’ll come back right away, so you guys just wait here, ok?” [Remiri]

Like that the two rode on the backs of Rheinbach-sama’s dragons and approached the castle. After a few seconds, they came back.

“Ryouma-chan’s right. The fortress is a magical beast.” [Remiri]

Status

Name Ghost House

Skills Spawn Ghosts Lv7; Enshrine Remains Lv9; Mimic Lv9; Regenerate Lv7

After hearing the results of Rheinbach-sama’s Monster Identify, there was no doubting it.

That fortress was definitely the one responsible for all those undead. That Enshrine Remains skill proves it. It’s exactly the same as the grave slime’s.

That Spawn skill of it has also got to be related with the undead, just like the Attract Ghosts and Absorb Ghosts skill are. It says spawn, so I suppose it's an ability that creates undead? Wait a moment, wouldn't this mean that this thing might be the reason for the sudden increase of undead in the troll canyon?

I see it has a Regenerate skill. That's probably what fixed that gate. It's an ability that the undead also possess, so I checked with the grave slimes whether the fortress was also ^{undead} food, and it gave me a 'Now that you mention it!' feeling in response. It looks like they were fooled too.

After that we tried breaking the castle walls, but it just fixed itself again. As for light magic, the ghost house was originally a fortress, so it didn't work. Although it seems that the undead stopped coming for a moment when the ghost house had to regenerate itself.

Observing the ghost house through the slimes, it seems that when we destroyed a part of the castle walls, those parts stopped being a part of the magical beast for a moment, but only until it regenerated. So the fortress can fix itself and there's no end to the undead... Isn't there an easy way to kill this thing? Like a nucleus or something like the slimes?

Also, we're still investigating, but it seems highly probable that this ghost house doesn't have any way of attacking aside from spawning undead.

If so, then I wonder if the lich was born from this ghost house? Or perhaps they're benefiting from each other instead?

In any case, I'm glad I had the grave slimes with me. Not just for their fighting power, but also because we probably wouldn't have figured out that fortress itself was living if not for them having similar abilities.

CHAPTER 28

In the canyon, at the edge of the open square where a rotting stench filled the air, were Ryouma and his friends battling the undead.

“There’s... too many!” [Shiva]

The analysis of the grave slime brought Ryouma and his friends to barrage the castle walls with light magic, causing the ghost house’s walls to turn into mere walls. Given time the walls would turn back to being a part of the ghost house, but the barrage of light magic scared the ghost house into spawning more undead.

The ghost house spawned as much it could, but the great horde just outside the gates kept the undead from leaving. With nowhere to go, the undead kept growing in number inside the fortress, until eventually, they started appearing even above the walls and gates. Then in their pushing and pulling of each other as their numbers grew too great for the castle walls, they spilled into the square like a waterfall of rot and bones. They would have surely died if they were yet alive, but being undead, the greater half of them only picked themselves up before walking again.

The undead horde did not come from only one direction, but from all four directions of the fortress. At that, it no longer mattered how many the slimes ate or how many the dragons cooked. This was already far beyond the number they could handle. Even the wyverns the dragons once felled became undead... Not that they lasted long though, as the dragons killed them as soon as they saw them.

The ghost house is a living creature, so it spawns more undead near the area where it feels pain, while spawning less in other areas. When Ryouma’s group saw that, they figured that the rate the undead was spawning must be the fastest the ghost house could... But knowing that alone wouldn’t put a stop to the undead.

As the ghost house rampaged with the power of number, the slimes sent a message to Ryouma, and he called out to the others.

“The full grave slimes are coming out!” [Ryouma]

Although full, that only really meant that they needed time to digest all the undead they’d eaten before they could eat again. The problem, however, was that there were just too many undead. The slimes’ rate of digestion was not fast enough to reduce the undead’s number.

At this rate, the undead would surely manage to break through the front lines. Realizing that, Ryouma thought up a new plan.

“Remiri-neesan! We can still hold if the grave slimes fuse to become an emperor slime, but!” [Ryouma]

“You’re worried about the lich, right? Don’t worry, just leave it to me! I’ll protect the slimes, so you just deal with the undead right in front of you!” [Remiri]

“Understood! Slimes, retreat!” [Ryouma]

The emperor grave slime is much more powerful than a mere grave slime, so it should do better than the grave slimes. That’s the reason why Remiri agreed to Ryouma’s plan and went off to fight the lich.

As soon as the grave slimes received Ryouma’s orders, they ran as fast as they could to fuse while Shiva, Sebasu, and Ryouma protected them. As the slimes fused together, the fused body grew bigger and bigger until it filled the road.

After seeing the grave slimes fuse successfully, Ryouma gave them his orders.

“Fun!!” [Shiva]

Shiva swept the zombies away with his weapon. More zombies came from the right, but the emperor grave slime was waiting for them; and it crushed them into the ground with its tentacles.

Moreover, with the emperor grave slime able to move its nucleus into its tentacles, turning what would normally be a mere extension into its main body, the emperor grave slime was able to move faster than anyone.

After that the emperor grave slime gathered the undead with its Attract Ghosts skill, and then crushed them one after another with its tentacles. With the magic using slimes and the rimel birds added, Ryouma and his friends were finally able to start pushing the undead back.

“Can the slimes keep this up?” [Shiva]

“The way they are now they can digest just fast enough to match the undead, so it should be fine. We have to do something about the ghost house though. The ghost house can be eaten, but it’s too big.” [Ryouma]

“I see... Let’s prioritize the survivors first. If we can just do something about them, it won’t even matter even if we don’t defeat these monsters here.” [Shiva]

“Well this is a bit much for a party of five to handle.” [Ryouma]

“If we knew about this before coming here, the adventurer’s guild could have gathered the adventurers with an emergency request. Even the army and the knights might have moved.” [Shiva]

“Right, but... Since we’re here anyway, we might as well try... Rheinbach-sama! What’s the location of the survivors!?” [Ryouma]

“They’ve all been gathered at the center of the fortress! There’s 16 of them, but they haven’t been moving at all!” [Rheinbach]

Excluding the castle walls, the row house in the fortress was about 60 meters wide and 20 meters long with three doors. As for the interior, Ryouma didn’t know either. But the fact that the surviving adventurers were all gathered into one spot without moving sounded very much like a trap.

Still... they had to try save them.



“Let’s go!!” [Shiva]

At Shiva’s words, the emperor grave slime led the charge with Ryouma, Shiva, and Sebasu as they plunged into the horde of undead. The other two who were flying in the air covered them until they reached the castle walls, where Ryouma gave the slime a new order.

“Hide!” [Ryouma]

The door thrown open, the slime extended two of its tentacles to hook the castle walls above. Then using that as support, the slime thinly spread itself over the castle walls like a banner.

It spread itself further over the land until the door of the row house. And after Ryouma and his friends entered through the gate, the slime kept the gate from closing, while taking the opportunity to catch the nearby undead after turning what remained of its body into tentacles.

The undead frequently came from down the road, but because of the slime catching the incoming slimes, the undead could never manage to make it up.



Like this Ryouma’s group was able to make a safe road; and after reaching the row house, they took out their magic tools and used them.

As Sebasu warily opened the door...

“uAA...”

“OOo—”

A room packed with undead was waiting for them.

” ‘Flash Grenade’ ” [Ryouma]

With the flick of his fingers, Ryouma threw a ball of light into the room full of undead, and Sebasu hurriedly closed the door. As light spilled from inside through the narrow gaps of the door, everything went silent. The group waited for the light spilling through the gaps to cease, then—

“Go!!!” [Shiva]

The first to charge was Ryouma, who ran into the room with his whole body wrapped in light magic, then when the coast was clear, the rest of the group followed. What greeted them then was a room 20 meters wide and 10 meters long. There were pillars erected here and there for support, but overall, it was a long and narrow room with a lonely atmosphere to it.

There were no undead left when they entered; and the sixteen adventurers were right there on the ground next to the wall facing them.

(So that’s why... The reason we didn’t see anymore adventurers other than those first three was because they couldn’t move anymore.) [Ryouma]

The 16 adventurers were yet alive, but they could no longer move because of all the injuries and fatigue they’ve incurred.

Even mind control couldn’t make a broken body move.

Ryouma went quiet upon seeing their situation, then—

(‘Light Shot’ !) [Ryouma]

He casted a beam of light above his head.

“—!? Kaka!!” [Lich]

Suddenly, out of nowhere, was a set of bones wrapped in robes floating above him.

The Light Shot hit its right arm, and the lich squirmed in pain up there by the ceiling before spinning down opposite Ryouma’s direction like a plane crashing, but somehow it managed to successfully land on the ground. It might have been because of the pain of losing its arm or it might have been because of the frustration of having its surprise attack foiled, but regardless what the reason may be, the lich glared angrily at Ryouma.

(Don’t think the same trick will always work.) [Ryouma]

Ryouma and the lich glared at each other, then as they took a step toward each other, Shiva and Sebasu bolted for the surviving adventurers. Fighting in a narrow room with many people could cause undesired results, so they had decided beforehand for Ryouma to deal with the lich should it appear while Shiva and Sebasu would help the adventurers.

“Ka—” [Lich]

” ‘Light Shot’ !” [Ryouma]

The lich floated in the air and tried to cast a spell toward Shiva and Sebsau, but Ryouma stopped it, and he stood between the lich and them. The undead couldn’t appear yet because of the trace of light magic left from the earlier spell, but it was only a matter of time. The danger will greatly increase once they come, so they couldn’t waste time. They needed to save the adventurers as soon as possible.

“Don’t get in the way! ...Not that you can understand me.” [Ryouma]

“KA KA KA KA.” [Lich]

As the lich laughed, it casted the dark magic ‘Dark Ball’ toward Ryouma, which Ryouma

met head-on with his own 'Light Ball'. As the two spells canceled each other out, Ryouma closed in on the lich and he struck out his fist covered in light magic.

The lich slipped away again far from his fist's reach, but...

" 'Light Shot' " [Ryouma]

Light magic burst out of Ryouma's fist like a buckshot, leaving the lich with little room to maneuver. It still managed to get off unhurt, but a part of the spell penetrated its robes. Seeing the part that got hit melt, Ryouma was able to confirm that his spells could indeed hurt the lich. The lich retreated once more, and Ryouma pursued after it relentlessly, not letting it have the leeway to cast a higher tier of dark magic.



Just as Remiri had mentioned, the lich was weak in a straight up fight, and Ryouma didn't have any difficulties fighting the lich.

But the lich's swaying and irregular movements that it could do because of its inhuman body allowed it to dodge any fatal attacks.

(It's tenacious but it's not strong... Hmm... At this rate, won't this guy just run away?)
[Ryouma]

In the short time they had been fighting, the undead has been attacking less and less and not even regenerating. It was clearly weakened. If he were to keep pushing it like this, wouldn't it just run? With that thought in mind, Ryouma decided to push the lich hard. But no matter how much he hurt the lich, it just wouldn't run.

(Either it really doesn't want to let the captive adventurers go, it's planning something, or there's something else going on here... Anyway, I shouldn't attack it carelessly. The captive adventurers are the priority. All I have to do is to ensure that this thing doesn't get past me.) [Ryouma]

And so, Ryouma fought his hardest to keep the lich at bay.

Then as they continued to fight...

“Ku.” [Lich]

” ‘Wind Cutter’ !!” [Shiva]

“Ka!?” [Lich]

Having finished securing the adventurers, Shiva casted a wind magic against the lich.

Fighting Ryouma alone was one thing, but fighting all three by itself was another. The odds it would just straight up lose was high. Even the lich understood that. And so this time it decidedly tried to run away.

Stripping off its robes and throwing them to Ryouma, then casting a dark ball toward Sebasu, it ran away with all its might for the wall from where Ryouma’s group entered even as it had to endure a heavy wound from Shiva’s wind magic.

(Think we’re going to let you run?) [Ryouma]

” ‘Light Shot’ !” [Ryouma]

Ryouma casted a buckshot of light magic toward the back of the weakened lich.

(!?) [Ryouma]

But then three zombies appeared right above Ryouma and the path of the Light Shot, blocking the magic and keeping it from reaching the lich.

(To think they’d start coming now! Are we out of time?) [Ryouma]

Without the time to feel vexed about letting the lich run, undead began to rain from the ceiling. And in no time at all, the whole place was packed with undead, especially the exit.

“Over here!!” [Sebasu]

Ryouma and Shiva immediately ran toward Sebasu when they heard his voice, and when they reached him, Sebasu chanted just one word.

” ‘Teleport’ !” [Sebasu]

And all of the sudden, Ryouma and his friends vanished from that room now crawling with undead.

CHAPTER 29

Going back in time a bit, back to the moment right after Ryouma's group charged in, was Remiri going all out on the ghost house in an attempt to lessen the burden on Ryouma's group even a little.

She showered the castle walls in magic while the slimes and the rimel birds would lure the enemies' attention, letting the two dragons roast them black.

Rheinbach and his two ignis dragons knew where Ryouma's group and the surviving adventurers were, so they could fight as they pleased without fear of friendly fire.

Remiri would've joined them as well, but she had her hands full protecting the emperor grave slime from the lich's mind control. Not to mention, she also needed to conserve her magic to heal the captive adventurers later.

As she watched the emperor grave slime that was shaped like a plate, the ghost house in the backdrop caught her attention, and she became thoughtful.

(How can we defeat this ghost house? My attacks don't really seem to be working. Does it have a nucleus after all? But if so, how are we supposed to find something like that?... Hmm?)

While deep in thought, she noted the roof by the edge of her vision, and all of the sudden, a lich came flying out of the castle walls.

(It's here!)

" 'Light Shot' !!" [Remiri]

" KAHI!?" [Lich]

Immediately, Remiri fired off her magic which prioritized speed and accuracy over raw power, but the lich already knew from their previous battles that she would be waiting

for it.

Twisting its bones, the lich jumped right into the onslaught of light magic, but it could not come out unscathed from the flurry of light magic, and as the light magic crashed into a part of its ribs, the lich came out several bones short.

Remiri wasn't done yet, but just as she was about to cast another spell, something else approached the lich.

“!?” [Remiri]

The lich was almost near enough to touch the ground when that something stopped over the lich's head, bringing with it the cold of the wind to blow over the lich's head. That something was none other than a tentacle of the emperor grave slime.



When the lich passed through the wall beside the door Ryouma's group entered, it just so happened that the emperor grave slime was right there, on the other side of that wall, spread thin to create a path just as Ryouma had ordered it. And with the lich within its attacking range, the emperor grave slime attacked.

Dodging one and then another, the lich had no time to rest, as five tentacles now chased after it.

It was curious whether the emperor grave slime attacked because of Ryouma's order or simply because it saw the lich as food no different from the rest of its bony delights, but regardless, the slime relentlessly pursued the lich. And when it managed to catch a part of the lich, it mercilessly took away the femur bones its tentacles managed to latch onto, leaving the lich with no lower body as it flew away to the sky.

But as fortune would have it, there would be no rest for the lich for the girl on dragon-back had been patiently waiting for its inevitable return to the skies.

“Ka!?” [Lich]

“You’re full of holes. ‘Beam’ !” [Remiri]

A vast amount of magic power gathered at the tip of Remiri’s wand before she set it loose upon the undead as a destructive force of light.

“—!!!?!?!?!?!?” [Lich]

By leaving the lich to be attacked by something else, Remiri was able to take the lich by surprise and seal it within a pillar of light.

The lich tried to run away, but it couldn’t move its body; the most it could do was languidly move its arms. Gradually, its arms began to melt, and smoke began to rise from its body just as its strength quickly waned.

Having resigned itself to its fate, the lich turned its head to look straight at Remiri. There were no traces of pain or peace or sorrow or pleasure on the lich’s face. There were no emotions at all on that skull face of it. It looked at her, and that was all it did as it welcomed death. And then like a puppet whose strings had been cut, the lich’s head fell over, and the lich was no more.



After that Ryouma and the others were able to safely rendezvous with the aerial group. After they exchanged information and healed the captive adventurers, they rested in the safe zone secured by the emperor grave slime.

They finally managed to rescue the adventurers, but their countenance remained grim. That was not only because of the fatigue built up, but more so because of the horrible condition of the captive adventurers.

“Ryouma-sama, please have some.” [Sebasu]

“Thank you very much.” [Ryouma]

“Can I have some too?” [Remiri]

“Of course.” [Sebasu]

Ryouma and Remiri treated themselves to a cup of black tea with plenty of sugar. They had put up a field hospital of sorts with the use of all the matting they had, over which they laid down the captive adventurers, where they then removed their curses and treated their wounds.

There were 16 adventurers all-in-all that they had rescued. Half of those had wounds that would heal with enough rest, though they would have to overcome their fever and fatigue first. As for the other half, six of them would have to retire, and the remaining two breathed their last the moment they undid their curse.

With the three adventurers they had rescued earlier, they were able to save seventeen adventurers all-in-all. They didn't beat themselves up or anything with some thought like 'if only we came earlier!', but they did feel down. Though given the circumstances, feeling down was to be expected.

Ryouma looked around him as he drank the black tea, starting with the ever blue sky unfit their current situation, then to the slave demons, and then to his emperor grave slime.

He watched as the emperor grave slime would release an undead through one of its tentacles to slam into another undead, then the slime would take the surviving undead into its body and repeat the process, slamming undead against undead one after another to kill them all.

(I never taught it that... Did it learn from the ghost house?)

As Ryouma's melancholic countenance cheered up at that thought, Rheinbach spoke.

“What next? Are we going back already? Or are we going to try and beat this ghost house?” [Rheinbach]

“Wouldn't it be best to return first to let the captive adventurers recuperate?” [Sebasu]

“Ryouma-chan and I healed them lots. They’ll be fine as long as we leave them in the Dimension Home.” [Remiri]

“It would be best if we got some info first though. This thing isn’t something we can beat with just numbers. And there should be plenty of information if we just report to the guild.” [Shiva]

After hearing Shiva, Remiri suddenly remembered something.

“Speaking of which, while you guys were still inside, there was something that caught my attention when I saw the burning ghost house’s roof... What was it again?” [Remiri]

“You forgot?” [Rheinbach]

“Well, the lich came out right as it came to mind, so...” [Remiri]

“May I propose setting a time limit until which we would be gathering information then?” [Sebasu]

No one had any complaints to Sebasu’s proposal, so we decided to come back for the time being. To be honest, even if we go beyond the time limit, it won’t really matter if we still don’t have a plan.



Five minutes later, everyone was on dragon-back high up the sky, looking down the ghost house from above.

“Remiri, it was the roof that caught your attention, right?” [Rheinbach]

“Yes, there are burn marks on it from the dragons’ flames.” [Remiri]

“Hmm... Might as well, I suppose. Let’s try burning it down.” [Rheinbach]

With the captive adventurers now saved, there was no chance of accidentally hurting someone, so Rheinbach went ahead and ordered the five ignis dragons to line up, and then breathe out a powerful flame toward the center of the ghost house. The heat emanating from the dragons’ flames was so great that a shimmer in the air appeared, and when that great heat descended upon the ghost house, it was not just roasted black, but some parts of it were even melted.

“I guess it’s not very good with fire.” [Rheinbach]

The ghost house regenerated itself again after the fire, but something seemed to have caught Remiri’s attention, as she inclined her head and said.

“...Isn’t there something off?” [Remiri]

Remiri felt that odd sense of malaise once more, and as she pointed it out, Ryouma and Sebasu agreed with her.

“Now that you mention it, it does seem odd...” [Sebasu]

“How about trying it again?” [Ryouma]

After several tries of burning the castle and it regenerating, Shiva added.

“...Rheinbach, this time try separating the dragons into two groups, and then burning the castle walls and the roof at the same time. The ghost house just might regenerate slower.” [Shiva]

At that, the gears in Ryouma’s head suddenly clicked together.

(When I attacked the lich to keep it from running, I noticed the undead came out faster than when we tried attacking by the castle walls, but I thought I was just imagining it since I was caught in the middle of a fight, but... Maybe they really did appear faster.)

Ryouma looked closely as he compared the tenement houses and the castle walls being burnt.

The two structures were exactly the same at first, but as they regenerated, a difference could gradually be seen. And then 15 seconds later, the tenement houses could clearly be seen regenerating faster than the castle walls.

They tried this again several times, but no matter how much they repeated it, the tenement houses always regenerated first. They even went as far as to compare the regeneration speed of the other walls and even the ground with the tenement houses, and it seemed that the farther something was from the tenement houses, the slower it regenerated.

At this point, it wasn't hard to arrive at the conclusion that the place that regenerated the fastest was either the nucleus itself, or if not, then at the very least, it was something very close to it.

With that new revelation, Ryouma and the others all used their magic, focusing fire on the tenement houses. As they did, they found out that their target was located in the room to the right of the room Ryouma's group had earlier charged in.

"The weak point seems to be inside the room." [Ryouma]

"Well, it's obviously not affected by our attacks from outside, so attacking from inside would be our best bet." [Remiri]

"Looks like we'll have to charge into that castle again." [Shiva]

Although they reached that conclusion steadily, they all still felt like they'd taken the long way around.

(This magical beast is seriously a pain... I'm so tired already... mentally speaking.)

Ryouma didn't say that out loud, but if he did, the other four would have surely agreed with him.

Then Ryouma thought of something.

"Remiri-neesan, we've already defeated the lich, right?" [Ryouma]

"Hmm? Oh, yes. I properly confirmed it was gone before your group came out. Is something the matter?" [Remiri]

“Well, since there’s no lich and no captive adventurers to save, I thought we could just have the emperor grave slime charge into the room.” [Rymoua]

The other four all nodded when Ryouma said that.

With no lich around, there was nothing to threaten the slimes. And with no captive adventurers to save, there was no chance of the slimes accidentally hurting someone they shouldn’t.

“Then the next problem would be how to get them in.” [Rheinbach]

“It should be fine, as the tenement houses are mostly empty. If that still doesn’t work, then we can have the slime spit out some of the undead it’s swallowed until it fits in.” [Ryouma]

And so Ryouma and the others charged into the ghost house once more.



After the charge...

Everyone was on the back of the dragons again, but this time they were either wryly smiling or sighing.

“Too quick...” [Shiva]

“Sorry...” [Ryouma]

Ryouma inadvertently apologized at Shiva’s grumbling. Not one of them was feeling down because they failed to hunt the ghos house. Rather, the problem was that the hunt went too well.

Everything went exactly as it did last time after they broke through the gate, except this time Ryouma didn’t clear the room with light magic, and instead ordered the emperor grave slime to ‘swallow all the undead while spreading its body to

every inch of the room’.

Ryouma had only intended to have the slime clear the room of undead, but the slime ate everything in the room, including the pillars that supported the place.

It turned out, however, that one of those pillars was the very nucleus they’d been looking for. But it was only after the slime had swallowed the pillar, and the undead stopped spawning that they realized that.

The ghost house that had been pushing them all this time was actually such a weak magical beast.

Ryouma and the others made their way back home after an anti-climatic ending.

“Ryouma-chan’s not at fault, you know. And besides, it’s good that we managed to beat it so easily, Shiva-chan.” [Remiri]

“Ah, I’m not blaming him. It was anti-climatic, sure, but at least we’re all safe. Nothing’s more important than that.” [Shiva]

“That aside, what do you guys want to eat? I’m sure you’re all tired, so we should all have a hearty meal with Elia and the others after we hand all these injured children to the guild.” [Remiri]

With the danger gone, the atmosphere between Ryouma and the others gradually turned warm. And after an hour of flying in the reddish sky, they arrived at the city gates.

The gatekeepers and the adventurers who saw the dragons went alert for a moment, but when one of the gatekeepers saw that there were people riding them, he waved his hands to signal and lead Rheinbach to the landing zone. Then the party entered

the town after going through the usual procedures.

“Ryouma-kun!” [Michelle]

“Huh? Michelle?” [Ryouma]

Waiting by the gate was a girl dressed in man’s clothing. It was Michelle, and when she passed through the gate, she called out to Ryouma.

“I’m back... What’s wrong?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma thought she was just out to pick them up, so he was about to say ‘I’m back’, but then he noticed Michelle’s grim countenance, not to mention the fact that the others weren’t with her, so he asked out ‘what’s wrong’ instead.

And then Michelle said back.

“Elia... is gone.” [Michelle]

Those words clearly resounded despite all the ruckus in town, and when Ryouma and the others heard it, their faces all stiffened. Trouble had come.

CHAPTER 30

“What happened?” [Rheinbach]

Rheinbach asked, and Michelle explained.

After Ryouma and the others went to subjugate the lich, the girls stayed in the inn, but with nothing to do, they started to worry. They then decided to go to the church to pray for Ryouma and the other’s well-being. After praying Elia went to the toilet before she left, but she never came back.

“We searched in the church and along the road to the inn, but she’s nowhere to be found. Riera and the others are working with Oslo-san’s group right now to find her.” [Michelle]

“I see...” [Rheinbach]

“What are the odds of her leaving town?” [Ryouma]

Rheinbach sighed, then Ryouma asked that last question, but Michelle quietly shook her head before answering.

“We checked with all the gatekeepers of the town, but no one saw her. And besides, it would be really dangerous for her to exit town now. I’m sure she understands that too. We also checked her equipment just to be safe, and everything was still there in the inn. I doubt she would have left unarmed. At least, I don’t think she would on her own volition...” [Michelle]

Michelle’s voice gradually grew smaller as she grew more and more worried.

“...Well, there’s no point talking here. We’ll go look for her too. Good job letting us know!” [Shiva]

“Y-Yes! Ah, but first you should go to the inn! Everyone is reporting to Heckard to make it easier to share info, so we might learn something new if we talk to him.” [Michelle]

At Shiva's words, Michelle naturally lifted her downcast face, then she suggested that we go to the inn.

"In that case, I shall bring the captive adventurers to the guild." [Sebasu]

"I'll go too, someone needs to explain what kind of treatment they've received."
[Remiri]

"Alright, I'll leave that to you two then." [Shiva]

Like that Remiri and Sebasu teleported to the guild while the rest of us went to the inn.



One hour later—

Ryouma ran through the dimly lit town in search for Elia.

"Excuse me, did you see—" [Ryouma]

"Nope, nothing like her." [Villager]

"I see, thanks anyway. Just where in the world did you disappear, Elia?" [Ryouma]

They had gone back to the inn, hoping word of Elia might have arrived, but unfortunately, only the regretful face of Heckard was waiting for them. Ryouma sent the rimel birds to search for her, but there were many corners in town the birds couldn't go to, like the inside of the buildings, so Ryouma had to go himself in the end and ask whoever he could for a clue on Elia's whereabouts.

But in the end, the only info he could get was that she was last seen entering the church. Even Oslo's group who frequently got their info from this town couldn't find a lead other than the church.

"...Fuu..." [Ryouma]

Slowing down after running nonstop, Ryouma looked around him as he caught his breath and pondered.

(...If Elia had really gone somewhere by herself, there should be a lot more info on her than this. There are a lot of adventurers and merchants in this town because of the magic jewels, it's not easy to slip by unnoticed. Was she kidnapped then? It would be likely, but there's nothing pointing to that at all.)

Ryouma found himself by the corner of a heavily trafficked path.

(Barrack-san mentioned that the missing people might have been kidnapped, and he and the rest of his group seem to think it's the lich behind it... I mean when you think about it, I only found five people after a whole week of searching. A whole week where I used Cursed Song and the grave slimes to lure the undead, gathering several thousands of undead just to find a paltry five people. That's just too few.

...I don't know about the lich kidnapping people though, there's no proof of it, even though it was indeed gathering people... But darn it, what's the point of all this thinking!?)

With the odds growing increasingly higher that Elia was in fact kidnapped, Ryouma's patience started to grow thin.

(If she was kidnapped, then the culprit either ran away already or is hiding somewhere. Either way we need to find her quick... But how!?)

Ryouma grit his teeth as he thought of a way to find Elia, but in the end, he couldn't come up with anything aside from continuing the search.

(Should I send the rimel birds again? Maybe ask people one after another, or... No, there's no other method left. If there were I would have used them ages ago.)

Ryouma decided to search the town again, but just as he was about to run off, something caught his attention.

(Is that-!?)

That something was like a ray of hope, and Ryouma immediately went after it.



On the others side of the byway of the main street was a small path which led to a building annexed to a church.

Ryouma caught his breath before entering the church, then as he entered into what seemed to be a former chapel reconstructed into a hall, a middle-aged man who seemed to be a priest greeted him.

“Oh, a new face? How may I help you?” [Priest]

“I would like to pray.” [Ryouma]

“...Please.” [Priest]

“Thank you.” [Ryouma]

The middle-aged priest must have sensed something from Ryouma’s stiff face, as he asked no more and opened the door to the chapel. The place seemed to still be under construction, but the chapel was already completed, and there were even several people praying inside.

Ryouma bowed his head to thank the priest, then he took a seat in one of the many chairs of the chapel and prayed.

(Please! Someone hear me out!!)

And then light wrapped around Ryouma.

The hope Ryouma saw was none other than this opportunity to ask one of the gods. A plea to a god, so to speak. A normal person might not receive any reply even if he asked, but Ryouma's close relationship to the gods meant that he would surely receive some sort of reply.

Only, as to how much that reply would help him was not guaranteed. For it was up to the gods whether they would answer, and how much they would say.

For example, if the god to greet Ryouma would be the God of Liquor, who cared little about minor details, the odds are high that he would give Ryouma a more specific location. But on the other hand, if it were someone like the God of Magic, Fer Noevir, the odds of being rejected would shoot up.

Ryouma also rarely asked the gods for such help. This would be a first, for this time he was truly at his wits' end.

Gradually, the light grew faint. Ryouma knew that it was nothing more than for his own selfish reasons that he wished to find Elia, but even then, he hoped it would be Tekun on the other side—

“ ... ”

Wrapped in a jet-black dress, the god to greet Ryouma was the stolid God of Sleep and Death, Meltrize.

CHAPTER 31

Ryouma was troubled to see Meltrize. She was not as stiff as Fer Noevir nor as lax as Tekun, but she was the hardest to read among the gods. One reason for that being that she was usually expressionless.

(She looks mad.)

There was a faint shadow over her in the same color of her dress that one would not see unless one paid attention.

(I was pretty sure we were getting along, but I wonder if it was just my imagination...)

“Sit.” [Meltrize]

“Hmm? Ahh. Sorry.” [Ryouma]

Unsure how to start the conversation with the current mood of the god before him, Ryouma was beaten to the punch when Meltrize asked him to take a seat. Ryouma accepted her offer, and he sat himself opposite the goddess at the small table reminiscent of those used by nobles during teatime.

“I know why you’re here, but there’s not much I can tell you.” [Meltrize]

“I came here knowing that might be the case. Really, if I can just get a hint of some sort, I would be really grateful.” [Ryouma]

Meltrize nodded and Ryouma listened as attentively as he could.

“This incident is as you’ve feared, a kidnapping.” [Meltrize]

“Was it planned?” [Ryouma]

“Yes.” [Meltrize]

“Is this the same person responsible for the missing people?” [Ryouma]

“Yes.” [Meltrize]

“Why did they kidnap Elia? Did they mistake her for an adventurer?” [Ryouma]

“...No.” [Meltrize]

“Can you tell their goal? No? Alright.” [Ryouma]

Unable to say any further, Ryouma’s last question was only met with silence.

“This is really what I want to know: is Elia safe?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma asked anxiously, and Meltrize nodded.

“She’s safe. Her life isn’t in any danger, and neither has she been injured. Of course, her chastity too.” [Meltrize]

“Thank goodness! Thank goodness...” [Ryouma]

Ryouma was greatly relieved to hear that, but Meltrize continued.

“You won’t have to worry about her safety until morning, but I can’t guarantee her safety if you don’t find her soon.” [Meltrize]

“So she’s still being held captive then?” [Ryouma]

Meltrize nodded and Ryouma’s face turned slightly grimmer.

“Where is she being held captive?” [Ryouma]

“Outside of town.” [Meltrize]

“Can I get something more specific?” [Ryouma]

“...They moved. It doesn’t matter even if I tell you where, as you’ve never been there before.” [Meltrize]

“I suppose the Oracle Skill doesn’t allow me to ask a specific location?” [Ryouma]

“That is asking too much from the skill.” [Meltrize]

In the end, he couldn't figure out exactly where she was, but there wasn't any point in panicking, so he told himself to calm down.

"I heard the gatekeepers didn't see anyone suspicious. Was that a lie?" [Ryouma]

"..." [Meltrize]

(I don't know what criterion she's basing when to answer or not, but it seems keeping silent means she can't talk in detail but that the question does have some relation to the issue at hand.)

"How many are the kidnappers?" [Ryouma]

"..." [Meltrize]

Silent again. Ryouma thought, but as soon he did, the shadow over Meltrize grew a little darker.

"...There are only 2 kidnappers, but they have some friends." [Meltrize]

The tone of her voice was the same as ever, but Ryouma was concerned with the delay in her reply and that shadow. He thought he probably shouldn't ask any further, but then, noticing his reaction, Meltrize drew away the shadow.

"Just ask what you want. I will be the one to decide whether to answer or not. And I'm not mad at you." [Meltrize]

"Then why are you angry?" [Ryouma]

"Because the kidnapping took place in church." [Meltrize]

(So that's why. But then again, considering how I need a church or something like it to meet the gods, I suppose it really is a special place for them... Anyway, at least it's confirmed now that Elia was in fact kidnapped in the church.)

Michelle's group and Remiri-neesan did go to the church to investigate, but they found nothing... These are the same culprits as the ones responsible for the kidnapping of the missing adventurers, however, so there's probably an organization behind them. If so, then there might be a trail I can follow.)



Ryouma felt the urge to run out to town to look for Elia this very instant, but he had to wait until his time in the divine realm expired, so he spoke to Meltrize again.

“Thank you. Just knowing that Elia’s no longer in town and is still safe is a huge help to me. Is there anything I can do back outside to show my gratitude? I’ll do it as soon as I settle this business.” [Ryouma]

“It’s fine. In fact, I want to thank you too.” [Meltrize]

“Thank me? Why? Did I do something?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma thought back to these past few days, but he couldn’t recall doing anything to be thanked for. There was the matter with the undead, but he was always having the grave slime eat and store them for later consumption, so surely she wouldn’t take him for that.

But it turns out that really was what she was thankful for.

“Ghost House.” [Meltrize]

“Sorry if I’m always asking stuff, but why exactly does that beast matter?” [Ryouma]

“That magical beast was a pain.” [Meltrize]

Then Meltrize started talking.

The Ghost House was a magical beast that fed on magical power and spawned undead, and the place it was settled at was one of the greatest concentrations of magic power in Troll Canyon.

“After you found the fragment of the demon king and gave it to Gayn, we went to change the flow of magic at Troll Canyon.” [Meltrize]

When the fragment of the demon king that was sucking all the magic power was suddenly removed, the magic power that was being absorbed all this time by the

fragment overflowed into the abandoned execution grounds, so the gods had to change the flow to ensure that magic was equally distributed throughout the canyon. This is the reason why there are so many magical jewels and weak undead now.

When the investigation team went to investigate the area, they went to areas where the concentration of magic power was greater. After all, the greater the magic power, the faster the recovery of one's magic power, and thus, the more undead and magic jewels in the area. So they put up a fortress in one of the places where the magic concentration was the greatest, but after they were done with their investigation, they took it down and left it there, allowing it to eventually turn into a Ghost House.

"I see. But since they're birthed from magic, and are there because of the great concentration of magic, then the spawned undead should be..." [Ryouma]

"Infinite. They would keep on being spawned, each time exhausting the world's supply of mana." [Meltrize]

"Ahh..." [Ryouma]

Ryouma let out an 'Ahh' as he inadvertently slapped his forehead with his hand. No wonder she thought the Ghost House annoying. There was already so little magic in this world already that the gods had to borrow magic from Earth, and yet here was a magical beast that added to that problem like a tumor. Then while Ryouma was quietly listening to her like this, a thought suddenly came to mind.

(...When you think about it, the Ghost House was born because of the investigation team, but the reason the investigation team came to investigate was because of the scattered magic power, but the magic power was only scattered because I removed the demon king's fragment, so... erm... Doesn't that basically mean that I'm the reason the Ghost House was born? Hmm... I probably shouldn't think about it too much. I mean the fragment was pretty bad and had to be removed anyway.)

"What's the matter?" [Meltrize]

"Ah, it's nothing. By the way, it's our first time talking like this, huh. Just the two of us, I mean. We don't really get to meet aside from the banquets." [Ryouma]

"Yes, it's a first. We have plenty of spare time except for when searching for the demon king's fragments, so you should come more frequently. Kufo is particularly annoying

when there's nothing to do." [Meltrize]

The image of a god who looked like a small boy smiling flashed through Ryouma's mind.

"Did you imagine it?" [Meltrize]

"Easily. I'll think of something fun for the next banquet." [Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, a faint light started to shine.

"It's time." [Ryouma]

"Good luck. It's a battle of time from here on out, so hurry. And make sure to have someone come with the four young girls, either you or someone else." [Meltrize]

"I'll do my best." [Ryouma]

Ryouma added.

"There's a high chance I'll find the culprits responsible for the kidnapping in the church, especially those guys who kidnapped Elia." [Ryouma]

As he said that, Meltrize went quite for a few seconds before saying.

"Ryouma-san, 'punish them well.'" [Meltrize] [1]

"Did you learn that from a certain show at a nursing home!?" [Ryouma]

Meltrize's sudden switch to that drama-like phrase caused Ryouma to inadvertently pull a tsukkomi, but the god in question just cutely inclined herself as if all was right with the world.

"It's a phrase I learned from another Earthling like you. Is something wrong?" [Meltrize]

(Come to think of it, Asagi-san also spoke in that drama-like manner, so by Earthling she's probably referring to Asagi's ancestral master.)

"That Earthling apparently really liked Japanese literature and studied it a lot."
[Meltrize]

"You don't really use it in day-to— Wait, he likes Japanese literature?" [Ryouma]

That phrasing caused Ryouma to feel a bit of malaise.

"Was that person Japanese?" [Ryouma]

"No, but he said his heart was Japanese. He looked up to the samurai and said that he wants to be like them." [Meltrize]

(His image of Japan is a bit off, almost like a foreigner otaku of Japanese culture. But I don't get it, if he's so knowledgeable as to even know how to make soy sauce and miso soup and pass it on to his successors, how could he possibly be so off with such basic knowledge?

Come to think of it, there was also that foreigner client who loved Japanese culture and could even speak Japanese fluently, but for some reason had "便座" (Toilet) tattooed on his arm. That client mentioned he had it tattooed because he thought it was cool. I wonder what the tattooist thought while he was working on that guy.)

When Ryouma noticed Meltrize still looking confused, he said.

"We don't actually... talk like that outside of dramas or plays." [Ryouma]

"I see." [Meltrize]

As they had that exchange, the light gradually grew stronger, and when Ryouma said goodbye, his consciousness returned to his body.



Upon returning to the mortal realm, Ryouma refocused his mind, then stood up from his chair and left the chapel. His conversation with Meltrize was really a load off his

back, such that when the priest saw him again, he told Ryouma that his countenance seemed better now. In response, Ryouma just said that praying calmed him down, and then left after leaving some offering. When he got out, he ran through the dimly lit roads of the town once more.

(There are a lot of rocky areas and cliffs around these parts, so the paths one can take should be limited. Anyway, I should first go back and talk to the others. They know I'm a child so having the Oracle Skill shouldn't be a big deal, but Oslo's group...)

Ryouma pondered to himself how he should share the information he received, but then something blocked his way.

“!!” [Ryouma]

Running through a path so narrow it would be difficult for people to pass each other in it, when Ryouma turned right to a path rarely visited by people, he noted a man whose face was wrapped in a cloth 20 meters away from him. Just a cloth wasn't enough to rouse suspicion, he would still be just a passerby, but the fact that the man had his bow aimed at Ryouma left no room for doubt.

Having already made the turn, there were only walls in Ryouma's flanks, so he prepared to pull out his katana upon noticing the man. But when he did, the man let loose the arrow, then vanished without a trace.

Ryouma pulled out his katana as he pushed down his sheath, unleashing the blade into an upward slash to meet the descending arrow in its path. It didn't matter that the path was as dark as could be, Ryouma cut down the arrow as flawlessly as he could in the light of day. There was a piece of paper attached to the arrow, and it came floating down the air when Ryouma struck the arrow down.

” ‘Search’ ! A magician that uses dimension magic?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma did not only invoke the neutral-magic, Search, but he also sharpened his ears and eyes to search the surroundings for his mysterious assailant, but the man was

already gone. Ryouma silently sheathed his katana, then headed for the paper attached to the arrow.

He'd only realized there was a paper attached to the arrow right before striking the arrow down, but it was clear as day that that paper contained a message regarding Elia.

Gathering the pieces of the paper – four all-in-all, as it must've been folded when the arrow was cut in two – Ryouma pondered to himself.

(That man was definitely one of Elia's kidnappers, but why now? What's the point of showing themselves? And what's the point of sending a letter through an arrow while aiming for the vitals?)

Fortunately, as there was no wind, Ryouma was able to safely recover all four pieces of the letter and read it.

Dear Ryouma Takebayashi,

Elialia Jamil is in our hands.

If you want to save her, come to the designated location alone at the appointed time.

If you tell anyone about this letter, you can consider her life forfeit.

(Whether I follow this letter's order or not, if the others find out anyway and they catch wind of it, Elia will be killed all the same. Where and at what time do they want to meet?)

After reading the threatening letter, Ryouma scratched his head in confusion.

(That's odd, why are they calling me out personally? Wouldn't you normally want to call someone from Rheinbach's family instead? And this place is...)

The meeting place designated was in Troll Canyon, and it was quite far. In fact, Ryouma normally wouldn't be able to make it by the time set by the kidnappers, if not for his dimension magic. Clearly, the kidnappers knew about his ability to use dimension magic.

“So their real aim is to call me out?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma muttered to himself, but there was no one around to answer.

CHAPTER 32

CONTACT

“*Huff *Huff *Huff...” [Ryouma]

Aided only by the light of the moon and the light in his hand, Ryouma quickly moved through the dim paths of the canyon. Only a few minutes has passed since he left the city after receiving the threatening letter. Adventurers passed him from time to time as he traversed the canyon. They were probably still out because of the lich case, but regardless, Ryouma passed by them without sparing a glance as he hurried on his way.

The farther Ryouma ran, the less adventurers passed by and the more undead appeared. Yet he ran quickly through such a perilous canyon, avoiding needless fights to avoid needlessly expending his energy, as he knew that this was probably a trap.

Of course, there were times when he couldn't avoid a fight too.

“U...” [Zombie 1]

“A...” [Zombie 2]

Two zombies appeared before him, blocking his path.

“Fu!” [ryouma]

But with a swing of his ki-reinforced adamantite katana, he cut the two zombies in half with a single stroke. That alone wouldn't kill the zombies for good, but it was enough to keep them from moving until they regenerated, giving Ryouma ample time to leave them in the dust, which he did.

Ryouma madly rushed through the canyon likes this, but unbeknownst to him, he was being watched.

“*Aho...” [Harris Crow] [1]

A lone harris crow was flying up in the skies, hidden behind the veil of darkness, as it watched Ryouma running through the canyon. This harris crow was not here by coincidence. It was here precisely to watch Ryouma, as it sent everything it saw back to someone far away.



Beneath the shade of a rock in a place not too far from the city, were a man dressed in metal armor from head to toe and a man dressed in leather armor. They were both members of the group responsible for the kidnappings. The leather-armored man was watching Ryouma through the Harris Crow.

“Has he made any suspicious movements?” [Metal-Armored Man]

“He doesn’t look very happy, but he’s following our orders alright. Only, he’s moving a bit too fast. at this rate, he’ll arrive ahead of schedule... How’s the city?” [Leather-Armored Man]

“No word yet... Never mind, he’s here.” [Metal-Armored Man]

A man wielding a bow suddenly appeared from the shadows. He was obviously one of their friends.

“Yo, how is everyone?” [Bow-Wielding Man]

The man covered in armor asked in a jovial tone.

“You’re late. Has there been any movements in town?” [Metal-Armored Man]

“None. The guy called Ryouma did as instructed, and left town after getting some random request from the guild. He did go to the toilet once, but he just went to relieve himself and wash his face. He didn’t contact anyone.” [Bow-Wielding Man]

“You sure you didn’t overlook anything? No one’s following him, right?” [Leather-Armored Man]

The bow-wielding man responded in a voice slightly more serious than earlier.

“I had people in place to watch the guy. There’s no one following him. Preparing everything was a pain, but he definitely vanished into the crowd properly. There’s no point investigating the toilet either. I mean no slime or rimel bird came out, and there’s nowhere to hide there anyway.

Anyway, enough about me, what about your side? You made sure to watch him, right? One of the orders given was to not use dimension magic until after he gets far enough from the village.” [Bow-Wielding Man]

“Everything is clear on our end too. He looks vigilant, but he can’t do anything anyway, so it’s fine. It would be great if he just kept running and ran out of gas, but that’s probably not happening. Can’t even buy time...” [Leather-Armored Man]

After the leather-armored man said that, the bow-wielding man started complaining.

“...You know I said this before but that old geezer is really dangerous. I really don’t wanna face him in a straight-up fight. If the plan changes any more than this, I’m out.” [Bow-Wielding Man]

“Yeah, if he arrives late, he can kiss the woman goodbye...

...I can monitor him while he’s running, but once he starts teleporting, my harris crow won’t be able to follow. You know, something really just might happen before he arrives...” [Leather-Armored Man]

The metal-armored man interjected.

“...Stop it. And there’s no need for dimension magic anyway, since it’s not that far. Besides, it’s better than his allies finding out.” [Metal-Armored Man]

“Right, someone coming to support him would indeed be worse... We left someone to watch the town, so we’ll just have to brace ourselves.”

Not long after the leather-armored man said that, Ryouma teleported. With that the duty of the leather-armored man was finished, and they also teleported away.



One hour later—

Directly south of the center of the canyon was Ryouma, standing at the top of a tall cliff, looking down the staircase-like path of the cliff that led to the location designated in the letter.

(There's something there...)

In the designated location was a pillar of stone as high as one's waist, upon which was a scrap of paper. When Ryouma unfolded the paper, he found out that it was a map.

(They didn't tell me about this. They're really being cautious.)

Climbing up and down the staircase-like cliffs and passing through some thickets here and there took him all-in-all about 20 minutes.

(...So they are planning on ambushing me. I'm surrounded...)

As the wind blew throughout the canyon, the sound of clothes ruffling resounded along the sound of weapons being readied. The enemy didn't seem to have any intentions of attacking, but Ryouma could sense their numbers growing as he drew deeper the designated location.

When the location pointed out in the new map came to view, what he saw was a level area about as big as a basketball court, around which was a fence with uneven height reinforced by earth magic, blocking any other paths of escape. Further up ahead was another cliff, atop which was a lit torch surrounded by several men.

When Ryouma took a step further, a young man seemingly still in his 20s called out to him.

“Walk to the center! Don’t make any unnecessary movements!” [???

Ryouma did as he said, though he did so while making sure there were no traps buried under the ground. When he reached the center, magic wrapped around Ryouma, and 40 people showed themselves. They were mostly men with a ratio of four men for every woman.

Most of them wielded ranged weaponry like bows. They looked down on Ryouma from atop the cliff, where his katana couldn’t reach them. As Ryouma braced himself, he focused his senses to unravel the purpose of the magic he felt earlier.

“—A magic barrier.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma said that in a weak voice, but the earlier man managed to pick it up.

“It would trouble us if you ran, after all. These guys have their weapons out just to be safe, but they won’t do anything as long as you listen to me.” [???

When Ryouma heard the man say that, he started analyzing the situation. Ryouma had no intention of just blindly doing what he was told.

(He says that after going out of his way to secure a hostage? He doesn’t trust me at all, does he? Though it is true that I can’t use my dimension magic. Judging from the flow of magic power, it’s scope is quite big... I don’t think a person casted this. More than likely they used a tool or a magic jewel. It’s a barrier pretty much meant to be used for buildings. Since they’re able to prepare something like this, I suppose there really is someone behind them.)

Magic tools that could erect barriers were by no means cheap. Your run-of-the-mill bandit couldn’t possibly procure them.

Upon realizing that these bandits weren't just bandits, Ryouma sent an order to the shadow slimes hiding in his shadow.

(Since the magic tool is turned on, it should be emitting magic power. Use that magic power to find the tool, then hide yourselves in its shadow.)

At his orders, 8 shadow slimes began to move to all four directions without anyone noticing.

(The slimes can take care of the barrier, so I should just focus on confirming Elia's whereabouts...)

"I came as you asked, but you are the people responsible for kidnapping Elia, right? While I do want to know why you had to go out of your way to call me out like this, there's something I want to know first. Is Elia safe?" [Ryouma]

Ryouma firmly asked.

"It would have been troublesome if she made a fuss, so we put her to sleep and gagged her, then stuffed her in a bag." [???

"I want to see she's safe." [Ryouma]

"Oh, then it that case... Oi! Bring the bag!" [???

(Is this young man the leader? Sure is different from all the chief heads I've seen until now. He's quite young too. Actually, it's not just him, they're all young.)

The kidnapers all looked fairly young. Even the oldest among them looked no older than their twenties.

(...Will they really bring Elia?)

“The place where we keep the hostage is a bit far, so it’ll take a bit of time until they arrive. Why don’t we talk until then?” [???

Ryouma’s gaze became sharp at those words.

“Don’t be like that. It would be a waste to just wait without doing anything, right?” [???

(Well I do want to know why they called me out here...)

“Let’s hear it then.” [Ryouma]

And so the young chief head told Ryouma his demands.

CHAPTER 33

THE START OF COUNTERATTACK!

“Join us.” [Bandit Leader]

Ryouma thought for sure the man would ask for wealth or goods. Never did he think that the man would actually ask him to join them.

“We work in the slave industry for the Dark Guild. We’re responsible for the securing and selling of slaves and people who know how to fight. Strong people are really important, you know?”

“We’ll have to put a magic tool on you to keep you from rebelling, but we can promise you food and treatment no different from us. It would be a pain if you couldn’t fight when needed, after all.” [Bandit Leader]

“I thought the Dark Guild saw me as a thorn in the foot? I heard it from time to time from the bandits I’ve caught.” [Ryouma]

The bandit leader chuckled when Ryouma said that.

“A message did go around saying to avoid recklessly messing with you, but that was only because there was no point in those small fries attacking you.

There are people in the guild who dislike you, yes, but everyone acknowledges your strength, which is why there is value in enslaving you.

Many would rather sell you afterwards, but we have no such intentions. In the Dark Guild, money and achievements are everything. No one can take another person’s achievements, doing so means either a beating, excommunication, or even worse, the cellar. As your captors, you belong to us, Ryouma Takebayashi. No one can force us to sell you.” [Bandit Leader]

The man said as he made a cutting motion to his neck.

Ryouma, however, did not understand what he meant by the “cellar”. Sensing that, the man called out behind him.

“Ahh, by cellar, we’re referring to that... Oi! Bring that old man over!” [Bandit Leader]

“Yes!” [Henchman]

The thin-haired man behind the leader entered a small path, then when he came back, he was dragging a hooded man. The man brought that hooded man to the leader.

“Those who commit an unpardonable crime end up in the cellar. They become slaves of the Dark Guild.” [Bandit Leader]

When the leader took off the hood covering the man’s face, Ryouma twitched.

The man’s face was covered with wounds clearly inflicted by another man. There were scars even on the hands that peeked out of his long sleeves, but despite all that, what really bothered Ryouma was those pair of eyes that were full of hostility as they glared at Ryouma.

“He won’t be able to get in town with all those wounds, and if he does run, we’ll be able to easily bring him back. People who fall into the cellar aren’t given any opportunities to redeem themselves. They are made to work minor jobs away from prying eyes. Many of those who fall into the cellar never make it out, only quietly dying, never to be heard of again. That’s why we call it the cellar.

Well, they do sometimes get lucky and end up getting transferred. If they’re really lucky, they get put to use instead of just letting them rot in the cellar. This man, for example. I heard he once fought with you before, so I brought him here with me. It’s thanks to him that I found out all about your fighting style and your weird magic.” [Bandit Leader]

After saying all that the man looked at the scarred man with a mocking face. Ryouma also woke up from his pondering to look at the scarred man.

“If you want to say a word of complaint or two, I won’t mind.” [Bandit Leader]

“Thank you.” [Scarred Man]

As the scarred man thanked the leader, he looked down on Ryouma from the top of the cliff.

“It’s been a while... Do you remember me?” [Scarred man]

Ryouma became thoughtful for a moment, but...

“...Who are you?” [Ryouma]

“Heh... Don’t remember, huh.” [Scarred Man]

The man started laughing in self-derision, then with a voice full of rage, he bellowed.

“You forgot me... But I didn’t forget you. Not once! Did I forget you, Mr. Takebayashi! It was because of you that I ended up like this. Because of you that I ended up in the cellar! All because you had to squeal about the Dark Guild branch!” [Scarred Man]

“Dark Guild branch? ...” [Ryouma]

It was then that Ryouma finally began to recall the man.

It was such an old story that Ryouma had already forgotten about it, but some bandits once attacked his home (Tunnels) out of vengeance for catching their comrades. Of course, Ryouma took care of them, but he let a few of them go to find their base, which he did. The man before him is one of those men that he let escape. He doesn’t know his name, though.

“So you’re that guy!” [Ryouma]

“You remembered, huh.” [Scarred Man]

“Wasn’t the branch destroyed? Why weren’t you caught?” [Ryouma]

“Apparently, the others you caught helped him, so he wasn’t there when the raid happened.

In his place, those who were in the branch at the time were caught, and even the deal previously agreed on was broken.

After some investigation, we found out that this man here is the reason behind everything, so we threw him into the cellar.” [Bandit Leader]

It was the leader who answered Ryouma’s question. The scarred man didn’t say anything more, and just smiled creepily in agreement to the man’s words. He walked back behind the leader while grumbling.

(They make me sick. So this guy leaked information? The magic I used back then was an original if I recall correctly... But I specifically picked out the ones I let escape, so this guy shouldn’t know about my secrets either.)

Around this time, Ryouma received word from the shadow slimes that they had successfully hidden in the shadows of the magic tools responsible for the barrier.

(Good. All that’s left now is Elia... Since they kept talking about some cellar, there’s probably a lot of hidden places here... She’s probably in one of those. And this so-called ‘leader’, he seems to be hiding something. Let’s try poking around a bit.)

“I’ve heard your story, but Elia comes first. Where is she? Are you really planning on bringing her?” [Ryouma]

“It ain’t easy carrying another person safely up the steep slopes. It’ll take some time. I’ve said it time and time again, we haven’t laid a hand on her. So as long as you obediently become a slave, we’ll let her go home.” [Bandit Leader]

“Why do you have to go out of your way to make just me your slave? Wouldn’t it benefit

you more to have both of us as your slaves?” [Ryouma]

“You’re plenty enough. After all, you’re the man responsible for all that ruckus with the Tamer Guild and the Dark Guild. Those incidents really made you famous, you know. Anyway, being too greedy isn’t good.” [Bandit Leader]

When the leader spoke this time, the tone of his voice seemed far more serious than before.

(The tone of his voice suddenly changed... Is this guy the type to needlessly take care of his subordinates even when no one asked him to?)

There were those types back in my previous life. The new comers sometimes had a tendency to hide their mistakes, but doing that only exacerbated the problems, so these subordinate-caring types would pester them to avoid that, only to be shunned. In the end, they get tired, and... Wait, that has nothing to do with the situation right now.

Anyway, these types don’t really like getting tangled up with problems and unnecessary complications.

Now, he might not notice if I just outright change the topic, but it would probably be better if I change the topic shrewdly.

The reason he gave wasn’t a lie, but it was a bit too weak.)

Ryouma continued.

“Even though you already kidnapped her? From the letter you gave me, it seems you already know Elia’s identity. You should know, right? They’re not going to stop looking for you even if you send her back.” [Ryouma]

The leader didn’t reply, but he didn’t look perturbed either. Compared to him, however, the rest of his men were clearly agitated. It was a mystery whether they simply felt

guilty or were fearful of having made enemies with a duke, but there was no doubting that they were restless. The leader glared at them, then he spoke.

“I know it’s a bit late, but we actually didn’t have any intentions of kidnapping the young lady of the Jamil Household. We were originally supposed to just kidnap another adventurer or two, then run away. Of course, we did consider kidnapping those girls with you. But our targets would have been either one of those two from the beast tribes.” [Bandit Leader]

(That’s still plenty bad though... I’d feel bad even if it were Kanan or Miyabi who were kidnapped. Although, it is true that it wouldn’t blow up as much if they were the ones to be kidnapped.)

“Then why did you kidnap Elia?” [Ryouma]

“The two beast girls just wouldn’t leave the others while they were waiting for you to come back. When the kidnapper assigned saw the Jamil young lady leave the group, he saw an opportunity he couldn’t let go.” [Bandit Leader]

When Ryouma heard that he remembered the Ghost House.

“If it were just the lich we were dealing with, we probably would have gotten back earlier, but there was another annoying magical beast that complicated things.” [Ryouma]

“Another magical beast? I never heard about that... But if we knew about that we probably wouldn’t have kidnapped the young lady.” [Bandit Leader]

“Why didn’t you just give up on the kidnapping?” [Ryouma]

“That should have been the case. I also chose someone who normally wouldn’t have done anything unnecessary. I even warned him time and time again not to, but... in the end, greed got to him.” [Bandit Leader]

(So that’s what happened. His subordinate’s mistake is what got Elia into this mess. But that’s not really the reason behind why that subordinate of his made that mistake. The real reason is that this place demands you to cough up result quickly or else...

But wouldn't that kidnapper end up in the cellar if the search for Elia ends up implicating the dark guild?)

While Ryouma was thinking that, a man carrying a bag came with several people equipped with spears. That was the man the leader ordered to bring Elia. Spears were constantly pointed at the bag even as the man carried it; a little weight was all that it would take to puncture a hole into the bag.

The man walked away after leaving the bag beside the leader, but the spears remained.

"Open the bag." [Ryouma]

"Before that I want you to throw away your weapon and armor. Ah, just the armor on your upper body is fine. Then I want you to put this on. It would be really problematic if you ran away the moment you saw her." [Bandit Leader]

The leader threw a pair of metal rings to Ryouma. They were handcuffs, and a chain connected them. There was also a trace of magic power emanating from them. The handcuffs were clearly cursed.

(‘Identify’. A curse that blocks magic power. The counter to this is—)

"Put it on now!!" [Bandit Leader]

The leader grew impatient when he saw Ryouma move so slow, and he stepped on the bag.

"Nnn..." [Bag]

"What are you doing!?" [Ryouma]

"Put the cuffs on! If you don't behave..." [Bandit Leader]

Even when Ryouma reacted when the leader stepped on the bag, the leader just hurried him even more.

(This is a good chance. And besides, a curse like this doesn't really matter to this body. Shadow slimes, ready yourselves.)

Ryouma placed his katana on the floor, and removed his armor along with his bracers. But he didn't remove his other upper armor, the knife-proof vest that didn't look like an armor, and was made from the sticky slime's thread.

Everyone watched with rapt attention as Ryouma put on the cuffs.

"Happy?" [Ryouma]

"...Yes. Open the bag! Look!" [Bandit Leader]

As the leader yelled and opened the bag—

(Break the magic tools!)

Arrows, knives, and magic fell one after another toward Ryouma.

"Fuu!" [Ryouma]

Ryouma jumped to the side to dodge the first wave, but more came shooting at him.

(Were they expecting this?)

As Ryouma thought that, he threw a projectile toward the leader.

"What!?" [Bandit Leader]

The leader immediately reacted, as he bended his upper body down, allowing the projectile to only graze past his cheek. But when he saw what Ryouma had thrown, he

was shocked. That was none other than one of the very rings that should have been attached to Ryouma's wrist.

“Storm” [Ryouma]

As a cyclone was summoned, all the knives and arrows were blown away.

Ryouma stood at the center without any cuffs on his wrists.

CHAPTER 34

“Don’t stop!” [Scarred Man]

The one who said that was not the leader, but the man who was thrown into the cellar. He didn’t have the right to give orders, but it was the right order nonetheless. His ghastly voice kept the other henchmen from stopping fire.

Magic and projectiles rained from above, and while Ryouma was able to dodge them with his magic and his nimble movements, he still ended up getting hit. Fortunately, his inner vest was able to block them all, but several arrows were now lodged into it.

The outpour of magic and various projectiles continued until one arrow finally manage to make its way to the back of Ryouma’s head.

“Got him!!” [Henchman 1]

The henchman rejoiced when he saw his arrow successfully hit Ryouma, but for some reason, Ryouma didn’t fall down.

“—!!” [Ryouma]

Right after Ryouma made that sound that wasn’t a word, the man that prematurely celebrated was struck by lightning.

“Kento!” [Henchman 2]

“Forget him! Don’t stop shooting! Kill him!” [Leader]

“He’s... alive!?” [Henchman 3]

“You’re kidding!? He was hit right at the back of his head—” [Henchman 4]

When the kidnappers saw Ryouma keep fighting despite the arrow sticking out of his

head, they all started having second thoughts. Those second thoughts caused a delay in their attacks, allowing Ryouma the leeway to cast another lightning spell, this time knocking out several people.

It was then that the leader realized something, and he yelled after turning.

“The hostage is— He’s behind us!” [Leader]

But it was too late. Of the three guards who were watching over the bag, the man in the middle had his neck cut off.

The person responsible for that was none other than another Ryouma.

When they heard the leader call out to them and saw the head of their comrade flying, the other two guards tried to kill the hostage, but they were too slow.

“!? KyAaA!!!” [Hostage Guard 2]

“Tch! Ga...” [Hostage Guard 3]

The female guard attempted to penetrate the bag with her spear, but before she could, Ryouma kicked her down the cliff. The remaining male guard then tried to thrust his spear into Ryouma, but Ryouma pushed the tip of his spear with his left hand, letting it hit nothing more than the empty air over his right shoulder, then with his iron slime katana, broke the spear in half.

The katana didn’t stop, however, and it kept going into the man’s chest until blood spurted out, and the man was no more.

“aGU!” [Henchman 5]

Meanwhile, more and more people were being knocked out by the other Ryouma's lightning magic. Unbeknownst to them, however, the Ryouma that was fighting below was none other than a mimic slime transformed into Ryouma's appearance.

Ryouma had already switched with the mimic slime before coming here, and was controlling the slime through Sensory Link. The mimic slime itself wasn't actually able to talk past the level of a baby, but with Ryouma's help, it could easily pose as the real thing. Moreover, with the mimic slime being a slime, handcuffs had no effect on it, and it wouldn't die unless its nucleus was hurt. With all that in mind, the mimic slime was indeed the best decoy Ryouma could have asked for.

While the kidnappers were busy with the fake Ryouma, the real Ryouma had followed the mimic slime, and was sneaking around the barrier, while he ordered the slimes to position themselves.

And now, with his sneak attack a success, Ryouma took the bag and invoked his magic.

“Wait—” [Bandit Leader]

(“Teleport”)

“—Tch!” [Bandit Leader]

As Ryouma vanished with his dimension magic, the mimic slime and his weapons also vanished. The leader bit his lips upon seeing that, but...

“He's above!” [Bandit Leader]

He immediately found where Ryouma and the mimic slime were. When he shouted, the rest of the gang followed, and a storm of arrows came shooting at Ryouma and the mimic slime. But with the place Ryouma and the mimic slime were at being above the kidnappers and a blind spot to many, the arrows shot, but they never managed to get past the mimic slime.

As the kidnappers continued to shoot at Ryouma and the mimic slime, Ryouma ordered the mimic slime to defend while he confirmed Elia's safety. Upon opening the bag, he saw a girl with blonde hair, but it wasn't Elia. It was someone else.

"Figures." [Ryouma]

(I couldn't sense Elia's vast magic power, so I already thought this would be the case...

Shadow slimes, return.

Emperor Grave Slime and Rimel Birds, deal with those who try to escape.

Magic Slimes, Metal Slimes, and Iron Slimes wait at the designated location.

You may attack if the runaway kidnappers come your way, but don't kill them yet.

It looks like I'm gonna have to make that leader talk.)

After Ryouma was certain that the fake hostage wasn't in any state to fight, he gave orders to his slimes and stood up.

" 'Vaccine' 'Smoky Fire Ball' " [Ryouma]

After casting some anti-poison spell on himself, Ryouma threw down a fire ball that emitted black smoke, upon which, the leader screamed.

"Don't breathe that smoke!! If you breathe it, it's over!" [Bandit Leader]

Smoky Fire Ball was a combination spell of the magic attributes: fire and water. The fire ball would emit a strong poison, which would scatter to the surrounding. The

leader knew this beforehand thanks to the scarred man, but...

“*Cough *Cough... I breathed some...” [Henchman 5]

“*Cough!” [Henchman 6]

A direct hit from the spell could certainly knock someone out, but even without that, the smoke emitted could paralyze when inhaled. Many of the surrounding people ended up doing just that, and they fell down to the ground, unable to move. As the wind scattered the black smoke, more and more people fell to the ground.

“Well I’m not just gonna stand here, doing nothing! ‘Wind’!” [Henchman 7]

“Don’t blow the poison here!” [Henchman 8]

“Oi! Hurry and run!” [Henchman 9]

“Get out of the way!” [Henchman 10]

The poison had no effect on Ryouma, who casted an anti-poison spell on himself, or the slimes, who didn’t need to breathe in the first place, but the effects on the kidnappers were catastrophic. Half of them were either knocked out or forced to run, while the remaining half were led by the leader in an attempt to climb up to where Ryouma and his mimic slime were.

They still didn’t seem to understand what Ryouma not running away meant, as the female mage among them casted Earth Wall to lift them up, only for them to end up being bombarded by Ryouma’s poison while he waited for them up top.

By the time they got up, there were only 8 of them left along with the scarred man. If an outsider were to see this situation, he would surely think that Ryouma and the mimic slime were the ones being driven into a corner, but in truth, it was the other way around.

“You sure not running was wise?” [Ryouma]

Ryouma asked, to which the leader answered.

“Either way it’s over for us unless we kill you!” [Bandit Leader]

As soon as the leader said that, four of them attacked Ryouma and the slime. Each one of them brandished their sword or axe, but the mimic slime used its electric magic ‘Spark Ball’ to knock them out.

As soon as it did, however, the leader came running in to slash his sword diagonally down at Ryouma. In response, Ryouma spun on his right feet to dodge the oncoming attack, while striking the leader’s gauntlet with the back of his katana. Unfortunately, the leader managed to pull back in the nick of time, causing Ryouma’s attempt to hit nothing more than the leader’s sword.



The leader clicked his tongue as he tried to retreat, but Ryouma struck again with the back of his katana, this time toward the leader’s chin, but then...

“OoOOOO!!!” [Scarred Man]

The scarred man let out a great cry as he made a valiant charge for Ryouma. In his hands were a small sake bottle with cloth hanging out of its opening.

(That thing is dangerous!)

But right at the very moment Ryouma thought that—

” ‘Fire’ ” [Scarred Man]

It was not an attack-type magic, but a simple spell that lit something aflame, yet that was more than enough. The scarred man ran for Ryouma while holding the sake bottle that was now stuffed with a cloth lit in flames.

(Fire? ...A bomb!? 'Magic Hand' !!)

“!?” [Scarred Man]

As soon as Ryouma thought that, he used Magic Hand to push away the man and the bomb.

In the next instant, the sake bottle that had started to burn inside was pushed away, causing cracks to appear on the bottle, and thus, making it explode. While it didn't explode right away, it still exploded near enough the scarred man for him to suffer severe burns. The scarred man writhed on the ground away from Ryouma.

(He actually ran at me with a bomb! Is he mad!?)

Ryouma looked at the leader as he thought that, but for some reason, the leader was also surprised. It appears the scarred man was moving on his own accord.

While all of this was happening, the slime knocked out another three, allowing the leader to finally be captured.



“Can you explain what's going on?” [Ryouma]

Their positions reversed, this time the leader was the one being interrogated by the mimic slime – who was still in Ryouma's shape – with his hands cuffed by the magic sealing handcuffs and his whole body restrained by a metal slime. As Ryouma looked at the fake hostage, Ryouma asked the leader to explain the situation.

The leader seemed to have resigned himself to his fate, as he started talking honestly like a criminal in some B-Rate detective flick.

“We handed her to a slave trader.” [Leader]

“Where?” [Ryouma]

“The Dark Guild has many hiding places used to either store dangerous goods or be used as a ‘cellar’. So I guess she’s either being held in one of those places, or being smuggled through the tunnels.” [Leader]

“Tunnels?” [Ryouma]

“It’s a story from long ago, but supposedly, the people responsible for making the hiding places found a cave near Teresa, which they used as the starting point to dig the tunnels. Nowadays, adventurers visit that cave to look for magic jewels, but it used to be an unpopular spot that was useful for hiding.

The tunnels allow us to transport hot goods quickly, while the smugglers are responsible for transporting them.” [Leader]

After a brief pause, Ryouma continued.

“Were you trying to buy time by calling me out here? Or were you actually aiming for me?” [Ryouma]

“...We could get another lease on life if we could just get your attention and buy some time. Not doing anything meant either execution or the cellar.

If we could make you one of us, well... that would be great. But magic tools that can really bind one’s magic are too precious, and without any, we figured it would be easy to just kill you.” [Leader]

(In other news, these guys are basically disposable pieces.)

When Ryouma asked the next question, he asked with a colder, more solemn voice.

“That’s why you brought someone else? Because you had no intention of giving back the hostage?” [Ryouma]

“...If this were last month, we might have brought the real hostage. At that time, we still had a dark mage with us who could cast the Curse of Obedience, but his heart suddenly stopped before turning into a lich.” [Leader]

Ryouma's face twisted when he heard that.

"That thing was one of yours?" [Ryouma]

"Used to be." [Leader]

"...Well, there's no point talking about that now. Tell me how to get to these hiding places of yours." [Ryouma]



After getting everyone to spill the beans, the rest of the captured kidnappers included, Ryouma sent a Rimel bird to contact the others, while he quickly went south the canyons with the emperor slime and the fake hostage girl on his shoulder.

"You're sure this is the right path?" [Ryouma]

"Yes! Now, please! ...Stop! ...this thing ...I'm ...Going to die!" [Leader]

"We don't have time for that!" [Ryouma]

Ryouma ignored the leader that was being flung around beside him, while they hurried south.

According to the man, the tunnels were dug so deep that one could not go down it, but it allowed one to quickly reach the borders of the country. If one were to go slow, one could be there by tomorrow afternoon, but if fast, one could be there as early as morning.

With it being late into the night, Ryouma hadn't the time to dally, so he had the emperor grave slimes throw them up whenever they needed to climb up, passing through the tentacles of the slime, while the slime then climbed up by bringing its nucleus and body up the cliff. Then whenever they needed to go down, the slime would go down first, then they would jump onto the slime, using it as cushion.

Using this method, Ryouma could directly go South without any detours, but in exchange, the whole process felt like an endless ropeless bungee or reverse bungee.

Such a feeling could make even a big man cry, but Ryouma persisted while the leader cried as they made their way like this to the nearest hiding place of the Dark Guild.



Meanwhile...

Inside a carriage that rumbled as it drove was a lone girl.

It was Elia.

When she opened her eyes she looked around her surroundings.

“...Huh?” [Elia]

There were no windows in the carriage, and the paltry light in her vicinity was barely enough to see anything.

Looking down to her hands, she noted that an iron ring was attached onto the both of them, connected by a metal chain. When she looked beside her she noted that there were two others just like her, who wore the same cuffs. Looking around, she noted that there were even more people, and everyone was cuffed.

When Elia moved a bit, the chains rustled, causing the other two in front of her to take notice.

“Ah, you’re awake?” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“Are you ok? I can’t see, but since you were sleeping all this time, you must be in bad condition.” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Ah, umm... yes. I don’t think, there’s anything wrong with my body...” [Elia]

At most, she felt a bit lightheaded, but that was to be expected since she just woke up. There was nothing else other than that. She checked her body and her clothes again,

but with nothing amiss, she heaved a sigh of relief.

“That’s good... But then again, considering where we are...” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Where are we?” [Elia]

“We’ve been kidnapped.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“I see...” [Elia]

“You’re not surprised... That’s good. Nothing would change even if you made a fuss, after all.” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

The one who told her that they were kidnapped was the girl to her right, while the one who praised her was the girl to her left.

“You should probably sleep some more. I think they made you inhale some medicine.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“You were sleeping all this time, after all.” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Umm, you two are...” [Elia]

“We’re adventurers. We belong to a party known as Flowers of Famize. Doesn’t ring a bell though, huh.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“Sorry...” [Elia]

“Don’t mind. We’re an up-and-coming three-girl party. It would be strange if you’ve heard of us.” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

Suddenly, a man banged on the front door.

“Shut up! You’re noisy!” [???

“!” [Elia]

“Don’t worry, he won’t do anything. He’ll just yell, at most.” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“We feared he would do something to us too, but after he brought you, everything suddenly became lively, and they forgot about us.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

The two girls spoke to comfort Elia.

“We’ve been on the road all this time without a break, I think they might be running from someone.” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Someone might be coming to rescue us. It would be bad, if we couldn’t move then, so you should get some more rest.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

When Elia heard about someone possibly coming to save her, the face of four people came to mind.

“...Can I ask something?” [Elia]

“What?” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“Did you see them bring another girl other than me when they brought me here?” [Elia]

The two girls shook their heads.

“We were in a jail-like place before being stuffed into this carriage, so I don’t think there’s anyone else.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“You were the last one. Were you with someone?” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Yes.” [Elia]

As Elia said that, she meekly leaned onto the wall behind her.

(If the others aren’t here, then they’ll definitely know that I’m missing. Gramps will surely come to save me. These two girls are right. I shouldn’t do anything stupid.)

Elia stifled the fright welling up with logic.

CHAPTER 35

While Ryouma was moving as fast as he could to save Elia, the rest of the squad except for Shiva and Remiri were with Oslo's group in the emptied halls of the inn's cafeteria.

The atmosphere was solemn, so solemn in fact that they had barely taken a sip from the tea Heckard prepared for them. They waited and waited in that tense atmosphere, leaving their cups to cool, until finally, the people they had been waiting for came: Remiri and Shiva entered the cafeteria.

The girls all rose up upon seeing them enter, while the adults remained sitting.

The first to speak was Rheinbach.

"Any news?" [Rheinbach]

"A couple of related items, but nothing that could pinpoint exactly where Elia is."
[Remiri]

While feeling vexed, Remiri caressed the space slime atop the table.

After the girls managed to catch some people that were watching them, Remiri stepped in to make them talk.

"The curse of obedience?" [Rheinbach]

"They're all pawns. They don't know anything, so it's useless." [Remiri]

"Wait, they might be just pawns, but they've got to have a boss or something. We could just catch that person and then make him talk." [Riera]

Remiri just shook her head at Riera's suggestion, while it was Shiva who actually answered.

“Unfortunately, they really don’t know anything. You’ve heard of ‘dark gold’, right?” [Shiva]

“Yes, it’s an illegal moneylending business operated by the Dark Guild.” [Riera]

“Right, these people dabbled with dark gold without knowing what they were getting into. When the time to pay came, they were very troubled.” [Shiva]

“The Dark Guild used that as an opportunity to get them to help in their business. They were eager to help since it meant reducing their loans. One way they were used was to manipulate information. They would spread rumors of finding a mysterious corpse or a magic jewel mine.” [Remiri]

“...And I guess they would be very eager to kidnap adventurers, since they would be able keep the belongings of their victims, and it would be a simple matter to bring their guild card and say they stumbled onto their corpse. If that adventurer was reported missing, he would quickly be marked ‘KIA’, and that would be the end of it. As for the body, they could just say they burned it to keep them from turning into an undead. No one would think it odd for some financially troubled adventurer to go out of town either.” [Oslo]

After hearing Shiva and Remiri, Oslo spoke out his thoughts. Anger could be felt from every word he spoke, but no one remonstrated him, as everyone felt the same.

“There are plenty of people who would do anything as long as it benefited them. The Dark Guild specifically picks out such people to walk in to the guild and hand out the guild card of a missing adventurer. Even the leader of these people we’ve caught would be such a person, so there’s not much point in—” [Remiri]

“Everyone!” [Heckard]

It was then that the master of the inn, Heckard, suddenly entered the cafeteria.

“Dear, please calm down. What happened?” [Nell]

“Nell, a bird came with a letter. It’s from Ryouma-kun!” [Heckard]

“Give it to me!” [Shiva]

Shiva quickly read the letter, and after gulping, he spoke the contents to everyone.

“He’s found the kidnappers!” [Shiva]

“Really!?” [Kanan]

“What happened to Elia and Ryouma-han!?” [Miyabi]

“Ryouma’s safe, but it seems the deal was a diversion. He managed to catch the kidnappers and made them talk. According to them Elia’s being taken west through a hidden route.” [Shiva]

“West!? They’re headed for the border!” [Nell]

“They’ve thought about this... If they manage to take her out of the country, we won’t be able to follow her!” [Barrack]

Everyone tensed when Nell and Barrack pointed out that fact. Shiva continued to talk about the details written in the letter, but when he got to the last parts, he turned to Heckard.

“It says here to ask you about the location of the cave. The entrance to the underground passage is supposedly somewhere near the city in a sealed cave.

If I recall correctly, you spoke to Ryouma about some cave near a dump site a few days ago. If you know please tell us where that cave is.” [Shiva]

“I know that place! That’s where the entrance is?” [Heckard]

“According to this Ryouma got them to spill the beans after tying them up. The dump site in Troll Canyon is one of the entrances they gave. The other entrances aren’t very far from the dump site either.

I know from experience that these sort usually prefer some place that’s neither too far nor too close to carry out their vile deeds. I plan to propose a search around the dump site, but yes, we do at least have one sure lead.” [Shiva]

As Shiva said that, Heckard took out a map to give directions to the cave.

“Will you also be departing for the cave? Everyone seems like they’re about to go.” [Sebasu]

Sebasu said as he faced Oslo's group.

"The 6 of us here have already recovered." [Oslo]

"According to your story, those bastards have something to do with my little girl. Well, if that's the case, I can't be standing around here, doing nothing." [Nell]

"I won't be satisfied unless I beat them all up myself." [Barrack]

Oslo's group seemed like they would come even if refused, but before the group could respond, the four girls also voiced their desire to come.

"Please let us fight too!" [Riera]

"We might be inexperienced, but we're willing to learn!" [Michelle]

"We want to save Elia no matter what!" [Kana]

"Please take us along!" [Miyabi]

The decision was up to Rheinbach's group.

"Hmmm... Jumping into the fray is a bit... Considering you're doing all this for my granddaughter, I—" [Rheinbach]

"Why not just bring them?" [Remiri]

"Remiri!?" [Rheinbach]

Just when Rheinbach was thinking of refusing them, Remiri suddenly interjected. At that Rheinbach decided to take Remiri and Shiva to a corner to discuss for a moment.

"What are you thinking?" [Rheinbach]

"Those girls know how to fight. And besides, you know just as much as I do from that earlier talk that there are enemies among the guards and adventurers here. These six adventurers here are fine, but we don't know how far the Dark Guild's influence goes. Do you really think it wise to leave these girls in such a dangerous city?" [Remiri]

"According to Ryouma's letter, we're not in a situation where we can afford to split our

forces. I agree it's dangerous to leave them here, but... If we're taking them, they'll have to obey every order. They can't be allowed to do as they please." [Shiva]

Shiva had a stern face on him, but he agreed to take them along. In the end, Rheinbach reluctantly agreed.

"Alright, we agreed to take you along. But before we go, I want to absolutely make sure that you know what you're getting into. This trip will be dangerous. Are you willing to go despite that?" [Remiri]

The four girls grit their teeth as they nodded to Remiri.

"If you've made up your minds, I won't ask again. But before we leave, you'll have to leave a will. Write on it that you're coming on your own volition regardless of the risks. Got it?" [Remiri]

"Rheinbach, lend me Sebasu.

Sebasu, I need you to bring me to the border patrol. I need to tell them about the Dark Guild and the criminals trying to run through the borders, and have them tighten security. If these kidnapers are headed there, they might just catch them somewhere along the way, who knows." [Shiva]

"Understood. Are we going right away?" [Sebasu]

"Yes. As for everyone else, please finish whatever preparations you need. We won't take long." [Shiva]

At those words Oslo's group left the cafeteria with Heckard, while the girls went to their rooms to write their wills, and Shiva and Sebasu left through dimension magic.

The only ones left in the cafeteria were Rheinbach and Remiri.

"...Remiri, what's the point of writing a will?" [Rheinbach]

"I just figured if they were going to get cold feet, they might as well now. I don't actually have any intention of putting those wills to use. Think I'll let them die? Not under my

watch.” [Remiri]

“Right. I think I better double check my preparations.” [Rheinbach]

The two left in the cafeteria quietly hardened their resolve.

CHAPTER 36

Not far from the city in Troll Canyon was the hastily made rescue group of Elia. A tall cliff was before them, and in one corner could be seen a giant rock as tall and as wide as several adults put together.

“Is this the place?” [Rheinbach]

“Yep, no doubt about it. That’s the cave that leads to the underground passage. The entrance should be at the end of this opening here...” [Shiva]

Shiva’s gaze was upon a crack in the cliff beside the giant boulder that was barely big enough for a person to pass through.

“According to the letter this opening here should lead to a passage after opening it with earth magic. Rheinbach, Sebasu...” [Shiva]

“Alright.” [Rheinbach]

“Understood.” [Sebasu]

Rheinbach and Sebasu went through the narrow crack with Rheinbach’s Assassin Snake, while the others kept watch for any bandit that might attack the moment the path opened.

” ‘Break Rock’ ” [Rheinbach]

As Rheinbach signaled with his hands, he invoked his earth magic, causing the deepest part of the crack to collapse and opening a path big enough for people to pass through one at a time. There were no signs of enemy even after the path was opened, so Rheinbach checked his surroundings for a bit, and after confirming that the coast was clear, he called out.

“It’s clear!” [Rheinbach]

“Good! Let’s go!” [Shiva]

The first to follow were Oslo's group, followed by the four girls and Remiri, and then, Shiva.

"It's... huge." [Oslo's party member]

Just as one of Oslo's friends said, the interiors of the cave were huge. The Dark Guild had removed almost everything unnecessary to create a path big enough to fit several carriages side by side. If not for the untouched ceiling and the narrow stones extending from it, it would be almost impossible to tell that the place was a limestone cave.

"Wind is blowing from the other side." [Oslo]

The direction Oslo pointed to was none other than the direction toward the deeper parts of the cave, a path made from clearing the stalactites in the cave.

"Wait, let me get our transport ready." [Rheinbach]

Rheinbach summoned two magical beasts with a body 10-meters long and the shape of a crescent moon, upon which were ruffled thorns, and a tail at the back.

"Spike Armor Armadillo, huh." [Oslo]

"They don't look good and aren't very comfortable to ride on, but they're much faster than horses. Just sit yourselves in between the scales and lean your back onto them." [Rheinbach]

Everyone took on Rheinbach's suggestion and rode on the back of the spike armor armadillos except for Oslo, who could fly. Like that they rode through the passage as fast as they could, tearing through the humid air as they did.



After a few minutes of following the path, the interiors changed from the natural look of a cave to something man-made. The width and height of the road remained unchanged, but the ground and the walls were now clearly man-made, magic jewels faintly lighting the path from the walls just enough to see through the dimly-lit tunnel without needing extra light. The road slanted downwards and air could sometimes be felt through the holes in the walls to the sides.

No enemies came, not even undead, despite the whole place being seemingly built for an attack. They followed the crooked tunnel like that until Kanan suddenly said out loud.

“This smell...! I smell explosives up ahead!!” [Kanan]

“Kanan-chan, are you sure?” [Remiri]

“Yes. It’s the same smell I smelled when I was brought to observe Drilling and Blasting as part of my magic tool artisan training.” [Kanan]

“Ryouma did mention the enemy being in possession of gunpowder... Can you tell where the explosives are?” [Shiva]

“The smell is strong, but...” [Kanan]

“I see... We’ll just have to keep an eye out for it. Rheinbach!” [Shiva]

“I’ll slow down a bit.” [Rheinbach]

After Rheinbach ordered his magical beasts to slow down, and then proceeding down the tunnel for a good minute or two, the smell of explosives became apparent not just to the dog-tribe member, Kanan, but also to everyone else.

“...It seems to be up ahead.” [Sebasu]

Just as Sebasu said, after continuing down the path, they reached a dead-end. The lights were gone, and the tunnel was collapsed, leaving behind only the strong scent of explosives.

It takes a great deal of specialized knowledge to handle explosives. The slightest

mistakes could lead to an unfortunate accident. Moreover, with fire and earth magic being much easier to use, not to mention cheaper and safer, explosives were really only used in mining and in the army.

But right now that very explosive was used to collapse the tunnel, forcing Elia's rescuers to a standstill.

"I don't hear anything and the dust hasn't been stirred up. It's safe to say that the tunnel was collapsed long before we got here. I don't know how much of the tunnel's been collapsed, but we don't have any other lead other than this. We'll have to clear out the rubble.

But just to safe, let's first dig out another path to ensure we have a way out. Be careful not to cause a cave-in." [Shiva]

As Shiva gave orders with a stern face, the group started to dig. But it was then that the girls did something they didn't expect.

" 'Dig Tornado' !" [Michelle]

The spell Michelle casted was essentially 'Break Rock' mixed with a tornado. With a single cast she immediately managed to cut open a path 7 to 10 meters ahead. Having lost their support, the rocks started to collapse, but it was a good distance away, so they didn't get caught up in Michelle's tornado.

Some rocks still blocked the path, so Michelle casted another spell.

" 'Crack', Miyabi!" [Michelle]

"Leave it to me! 'Flame Bomb'!" [Miyabi]

After Michelle created a crack inside the rocks, Miyabi blew them up. Rheinbach and Oslo's group ensured that the road would hold up, and because they were working together, they were able to spread out the consumption of magic power among them.

While all of this was happening, Kanan and Riera were digging out another path outside just to be safe. When they managed to dig out a path leading outside, some undead appeared, which they quickly subjugated to keep the others from wasting their strength.

” ‘Dig Tornado’ ...We did it!” [Michelle]

After casting the spell ceaselessly, a hole could finally be seen in the rubble leading to the rest of the tunnel. Barrack and Shiva went ahead to check for enemies, and when they were sure that the coast was clear, they called out to the others.

“Good job! We wasted a good 20 minutes or so because of this, but if it weren’t for you, I’m sure we would have spent longer here. Block the alternate route we made, and bring everyone here. We’re continuing our chase!” [Shiva]

“Yes!” [Michelle & Miyabi]

After gathering everyone and passing through the rubble, they all drank some potions to recover their strength, and then they continued through the rest of the tunnel in pursuit of Elia.

CHAPTER 37

Elia's rescuers continued through the tunnels until eventually the sound of hooves galloping about reached their ears.

"This sound..." [Michelle]

"Can't see them yet, but that's definitely them, right?" [Oslo]

The spike armor armadillos ran side-by-side through the tunnel as it curved to the right.

With the sounds echoing in the cave, the other side must've surely heard them as well, so Shiva told everyone to ready for battle.

As the curve ended and the path once again turned straight, two rows of escorts and a carriage came to view. There was a good distance between them, so Rheinbach ordered his armadillos to hurry.

The enemy wore a cloth over their nose and mouth, and had a shield on each of their backs. The two carriages weren't alone. They were being escorted by a group of horsemen, who after seeing Elia's rescuer approaching, ran up to inform the carriage to hurry. As the carriage hurried, the horsemen fell back to fight Elia's rescuers.

"11 horsemen! They're coming!!" [Shiva]

"'Fire Arrow' — !!" [Enemy]

As the groups neared each other, the enemy simultaneously casted a volley of fireballs, which the group blocked, responding in kind with offensive magic. But the enemy was surprisingly well trained, and with 6 horsemen in front, they would switch with the five behind, alternating between defense and offense. Like this the enemy steadily blocked the path while defending against the rescue group.

“They’re surprisingly well trained, but unfortunately for them... Rheinbach-chan!”
[Reimiri]

“I know!” [Rheinbach]

” ‘Shadow Needle’ ” [Remiri]

As the two groups neared each other, Remiri chanted.

“What!?” [Horseman 1]

“Impossible!?” [Horseman 2]

“AhHHH! Aaaahhh—” [Horseman 3, 4, 5]

Two of the horsemen running in front coughed out blood as they fell from their horse. Rheinbach’s armadillos dodged them, but the enemy horsemen weren’t as fortunate, as three of them ended up either crashing onto the horses or tripping on the riders.

“It’s the Witch of Deathly Shadow! We’re too close! Get away –*Cough!” [Horseman 6]

The horseman tried to give out orders, but it was too late, and a shadow needle was already lodged into his throat.

“I never liked that name... How long has it been since I was last called that? 70 years?”
[Remiri]

The last thing the horseman saw was a black needle coming out of his own armor as it buried itself into his throat. When he looked around him before he lost the last of his consciousness, he saw his comrades dying in the same way.

Slipping through the onslaught of spells, the rescue group broke through the horsemen to approach the two carriages. But just when they right at the two carriages’ heels—

“!?”

The magic power emanating from the enemy side made the members and the armadillos stiffen.

Anyone could feel how dangerous that vast amount of magic power was. The source of it was a lamp-like object that was hanging from an eccentric-looking man's neck, wrapped around him by a chain. As soon as Remiri saw the man's lips move, she yelled.

“Block it!! ‘Shadow Wall!’” [Remiri]

Immediately after, a shadow wrapped itself around the entire rescue group as a blizzard blew in the tunnel.

As the two armadillos stopped, hail rained against them from the summoned blizzard, but the wall of shadow protected them. The blizzard lasted less than a minute, taking all the ice with it as it ceased, but while the group managed to endure it thanks to Remiri, she came out spent.

“Remiri...” [Rheinbach]

“I’m fine! That spell just now was a bit strong, but you don’t have to worry about me. Focus on directing the kids.” [Remiri]

Remiri drank a potion to recover her magic power while Barrack spoke.

“Hey, one of the carriages is stopping.” [Barrack]

“They’re 300 meters ahead of us. They have 12 guards with them, one of which is that magician from before. It’s been moving unsteadily for awhile now, there are probably people inside!” [Oslo]

“If the kidnapped children are inside that carriage, then are they trying to provoke us? Either way, they don’t look like they have any intention of running.” [Nell]

The group that stopped ahead seemed to have no intention of running away. It was curious whether it was because they wished to avoid having their men trip on each

other like they did awhile ago, but even the mage that casted that blizzard just now went down the carriage and started encouraging the other bandits.

“The enemy looks like they’re itching for a fight too, but we a battle on land suits us just fine!” [Shiva]

“Yeah!” [Oslo’s party]

Barrack along with two others and Shiva-san went down the armadillos with their best weapons as they approached the enemy. Not long after the sound of battle echoed in the tunnel.



Meanwhile, inside the dark carriage, the chains binding the victims rustled. They knew that help had come, but...

“Damn it! I can’t get it off!” [Male Adventurer 1]

“No way it’s going to go off just by hitting it, dumbass!” [Male Adventurer 2]

“Can the two of you shut up?” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“What’s your problem? Can’t you tell from that magic just now!?” [Male Adventurer 1]

“Of course, but that’s all the more reason why it’ll be harder to run now. At the very least, you should keep your voices down.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“Tch, then why don’t you do something?” [Male Adventurer 2]

“The carriage has stopped, and it’s probably a mess outside right now. If we let a chance like this go, who knows when we’ll get another? Besides there’s a chance the rescue squad might lose.” [Male Adventurer 1]

“...You think you can actually run from people like that just by removing those cuffs?” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Tch... Then what do you think we should do!?” [Male Adventurer 2]

A pair of male adventurers against a pair of female adventurers. It wasn’t the time for it, but the two groups couldn’t help but argue. It didn’t help that the two men were shaking in fear because of their lack of experience and the magic from awhile ago.

“Umm... Can I say something?” [Elia]

While the two pairs of adventurers were arguing pointlessly, Elia, who was sitting between the two female adventurers, suddenly spoke.

“The one who came to save us is none other than Shiva Gardak-sama. I heard his voice just now, so I’m sure it’s him.” [Elia]

“The former knight commander?” [Male Adventurer 1]

“No way... Wait, actually, there was that rumor going around saying he was in Teressa.” [Male Adventurer 2]

“It’s not a rumor, it’s true. Which is why he must’ve heard about us from somewhere, and came to rescue us. The former royal court magician also seems to be with him...” [Elia]

“The former royal court magician...” [Male Adventurer 1]

“Yes, so I don’t think they’ll easily lose. I’m sure it’ll be fine.” [Elia]

“H-huh...” [Male Adventurer 2]

“We’re really actually going to be rescued?” [Male Adventurer 1]

The two male adventurers finally calmed down after Elia brought up Shiva’s and Remiri’s titles.

“Pathetic! I can’t believe a younger girl is actually more composed than a pair of fully grown men!” [Girl on Elia’s Left]

“Marol...” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“Yeah, yeah, I know, I’ll think of something.” [Marol]

Although Marol’s words were harsh, the two men didn’t say anything in retort.

“But seriously... what are we going to do? We can’t break these cuffs with brute force.” [Marol]

“If we could just use magic...” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“These cuffs are a kind of magic tool, huh.” [Elia]

“Yep, which is why you can’t use magic with them on. Try casting a spell, you’ll find it’s not possible.” [Marol]

Marol curtly replied when Elia asked. When Elia tried to use her spell just as she suggested...

“Hmm?” [Elia]

“What is it?” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“This thing is certainly obstructing the flow of magic, but... I can still wring out a little.” [Elia]

“!!” [Everyone Else]

All eyes gathered on Elia when she said that, and for a moment everything went quiet, but not long after, everyone started talking in hushed voices.

“Young lady, could it be that your cuffs are broken?” [Male Adventurer 2]

“Who cares? What matters is that she’s free to use magic.” [Marol]

“Elia-chan, what kind of magic can you use?” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“I can only wring out a little bit of magic power, so nothing more than an elementary fire or ice spell.” [Elia]

Everyone dropped their shoulders when they heard that, but Elia thought of a good idea. A magic she can use even with a little bit of magic power. When she told everyone about it, they were incredulous, but with no other option, they decided to try it.

“Let’s check what’s going on outside first. There’s a chance they might detect even that little bit of magic power.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

No one voiced any complaints against the female adventurer’s words. Everyone went quiet and sharpened their ears.

“—!!”

“...!”

What they heard were the sound of jeers and the cries of people dying. The fierceness of the battle could be felt even through that simple wall that separated them.

“If we go now— Wait.” [Marol]

But then the sounds suddenly went silent. Everyone was on tenterhooks as they wondered what was going on, when—

“Persistent, aren’t we?” [Shiva]

“I could say the same for you, former knight commander... I can’t believe you can actually fight that well at that age. I know our men are a bit tired, but...” [???

“Your goal...” [Shiva]

For a brief moment, people started talking outside, but then someone suddenly cried out in a loud voice, and then the battle resumed.

“Looks like they were just taking a breather...” [Marol]

“To think that an S Rank really came...” [Male Adventurer 2]

“It’s alright now, Elia-chan. Let’s do it.” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

As Elia prayed for her magic not to be detected, she struck out her hand and casted a spell.

“Heat” [Elia]

The spell she casted was none other than the spell she casted ceaselessly to the point of being sick of it during her training with Ryouma. Just like in her training, she emitted weak fire magic power, which she focused onto the chains connecting her cuffs, slowly but surely raising the temperature.

“What’s the matter?” [Marol]

“Can you not use your magic after all?” [Girl on Elia’s Right]

“...It’s working, but the magic power is so little, it’s going to take some time.” [Elia]

Calming herself, Elia mustered more magic power than the tool could ever hope of stopping. Only a little bit came out in the end, but she focused that small bit of magic power into a single point, and gradually, the temperature rose. The heat emanating from the spell along with the fatigue of concentrating made Elia sweat.

“You don’t have to push— Is that...” [Marol]

Marol was about to tell her not to push herself, but then Elia’s magic finally bore fruit.

“Just a little bit more...” [Elia]

As the chains went red from the heat, the magic tool’s effect on Elia began to wane. Elia stopped for a moment, then casted Heat again, but this time, with less magic power than before. As time passed, the chains began to soften, until finally, the chains fell to the ground. Fire looked like it was about to spread, but a swift cast of ice magic settled that problem easily.

“Anyway, I guess we can call this a success.” [Elia]

Although she had some trouble at first, in the end, Elia managed to take her first step in preparing for their eventual escape.

CHAPTER 38

“Tch, ‘Blizzard’!” [Mage Leader]

” ‘Shadow Wall’ !!” [Remiri]

Shiva swung his halberd, and the man before him tottered back, forcefully casting a spell in the nick of time, which Remiri blocked.

After the raging blizzard calmed down, the two sides glared at each other.

“Sigh... I know it’s wrong to cry foul during battle, but seriously... just where the heck did they get this absurd magic tool that can absorb magic power? Our offensive magic disappears before it can hit them, our defensive magic is weaker... Man, what a pain, seriously...” [Barrack]

Barrack grumbled and the lamp-using mage that was fighting Shiva spoke.

“And yet we’ve already lost three men while only one of you is injured.” [Mage Leader]

Despite the overwhelming advantage of the enemy thanks to that lamp of theirs, the ones currently winning were none other than the rescuers. That being said, however, the situation was no less grim thanks to the enemy mage. Remiri hypothesized the source of his strength being the lamp, and so, Shiva tried to destroy it, but the mage was no slouch and was able to protect the lamp.

The chain connected to that lamp rustled as the man looked to the rescuers’ only injured member, who was taking refuge under the cover of the armadillos while the girls nursed him. It was only for a moment, however, as he was immediately forced to turn back his gaze at Shiva.

He couldn’t keep his attention away for long lest he left himself open to an attack, but what really caught his attention was Shiva talking.

“It seems you have some skill... So why? Why are you wasting your strength in a place like this?” [Shiva]

“What are you...” [Mage Leader]

“You people are soldiers, aren’t you?” [Shiva]

Those few words shocked both groups, then Shiva continued.

“To be more precise, you’re former soldiers. Former soldiers who once aspired to be knights.” [Shiva]

“Why...” [Mage Leader]

“The way you handle your sword is something I myself have been trained in when I was once a trainee; it is also the same technique I drilled into my subordinates. I may be putting on the years, but I haven’t gone senile yet to not notice that.

With skills like that there shouldn’t be any need for you to turn to banditry. If you use them properly, even riches and honor isn’t far off.” [Shiva]

“Don’t lump us in with bandits...” [Bandit 1]

“We haven’t been so sullied by money as to have ever attack a defenseless woman!” [Bandit 2]

“Stop it! The only thing that matters is our justice.” [Mage Leader]

The enemy did not take kindly to Shiva’s words; they cried out with bitterness in response, and it was the lamp-using mage who stopped them. At which point, this time Barrack cried out.

“Justice? What justice would scum like you know!?” [Barrack]

“The concept of justice might differ from person to person, but... I don’t think there’s any justice to be found in kidnapping people.” [Oslo]

“I don’t expect you to understand.” [Mage Leader]

The lamp-using mage did not bother to argue as the situation reached a boiling point,

and then—

“!”

It was curious who it was that moved first. Was it Shiva, the former knight-commander, or the mage, with his seemingly twisted sense of justice... but regardless, the curtains were once again drawn, and the battle resumed.



“Ha!”

“Ra!”

The enemy attacked with a ferocity that suggested they were ready for death, while the rescuers battled them calmly. Still, the battle was no walk-in-the-park, as the enemy mages made the battle that much more difficult.

“Ugu!?” [Bandit]

“Don’t underestimate us!” [Nell]

“Ka!?” [Barrack]

Nell wrapped her whip around the neck of one of the bandits when he let his guard down, pulling him down to the ground, and allowing Barrack to finish him off.

The lamp-using mage grit his teeth when he saw that, then he yelled to the four mages supporting them from the back.

“It’s gotten to this point! Do it!!” [Mage Leader]

In that instant, two of the mages at the back unsheathed their swords and ran to the carriage.

“!! ‘Water Cutter’ !!” [Sebasu]

” ‘Fire Arrow’ !!” [Rheinbach]

When the rescue group saw what was happening, Sebasu and Rheinbach casted their magic, but it had no effect. Shiva then stepped out to try and break through, but...

“Gu!! You’re not... going anywhere!” [Mage Leader]

The lamp-using mage ran after Shiva to stop him despite the wound in his body, but then all of the sudden—

The sound of explosion resounded throughout the tunnel as the carriage was blown away, giving rise to dust and smoke.



“You’re... kidding...” [Kanan]

The carriage her friend was riding on just exploded. It was only natural she would be anxious, and in fact, it wasn’t just her but the whole group whose countenance had gone pale.

“They’re making a run for it!!” [Bandit]

“Damn, they saw us! Hurry!” [Male Adventurer 1]

“Tch, doing whatever he wants...!” [Marol]

“Let’s go already!” [Girl who was sitting on Elia’s Right]

One of the bandits running to the carriage was blown away, while the remaining one managed to survive. When he saw the two male adventurers running from the carriage unarmed along with the three girls, he called out in alarm. Elia was among the runaways, but the rescuers did not have the leisure to heave a sigh of relief upon seeing her safe.

With the runaways having no armor on, a single blow was all it would take to fatally injure one of them. The remaining 2 mages at the back casted strengthening magic on themselves before giving chase, while the rescuers attacked even fiercer to try and stop them, but the lamp-using mage would not let them pass.

” ‘Fire Wall’ !! ” [Elia]

” ‘Thunder Bolt’ !!” [One of the runaways]

The unarmed runaways had no choice but to run where there were no enemies. They casted a spell or two as they ran, but it had little effect past annoying the bandits.

There was not much distance between the runaways and those fighting next to the carriage to begin with, so it came as no surprise that the bandits were able to close the distance in no time at all.

The runaways prayed as they ran. Every step they took, every breath they took... echoed loudly in their ears. When they turned around to look, they saw two men bring their swords up. Elia glared at them as she inadvertently braced herself for death, then one of the men struck her with his sword—

“Huh?” [Pursuing Mage 3]

—But before he could land that blow, an arrow had suddenly found its way through his head.

As Elia saw the man tumble to the ground after losing his life, she tripped over herself and fell as well. When she turned to look at her remaining pursuer, she noted that he too had stopped. And in the next instant, a man wielding a blood-smeared katana stood between her and her pursuer.

“GYaAAAAA—-” [Pursuing Mage 4]

That man cut down her pursuer with a stroke of his blade, at which point Elia finally

realized who it was that saved her.

“Ryouma... san?” [Elia]

“Looks like I made it.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma ignored the wary gazes of the female adventurers with Elia, looking instead to where the rest of the battle was unfolding. Ryouma was relieved to have finally caught up to Elia, but the lamp-using mage was not happy; he yelled as he crossed swords with Shiva.

“Don’t get in our way!!!” [Mage Leader]

Seeing the pursuing mages be defeated finally pushed the lamp-using mage past the end of his patience, as he cast another blizzard and left the frontline to rush to where Ryouma was.

“Step back!” [Ryouma]

Ryouma implored the female adventurers and Elia to move back while he fought with the lamp-using mage. He crossed swords with him once, then twice, and then thrice. When their swords locked, the lamp-using mage cursed.

“Cleaner! If it weren’t for you!!” [Mage Leader]

“Of course, I’ll get in your way. That’s the very reason why I came here, Alphodo!” [Ryouma]

The lamp-using mage did not expect Ryouma to know his name, and so for one moment, he froze. Ryouma did not let that opportunity pass, as he made full use of it to send the man flying. The lamp-using mage quickly picked himself up, but he was clearly more vigilant now than ever.

“Why... do you know that name?” [Alphodo]

“I learned a lot of things before coming here. I know that you planned all of this, and I know your goals too. Really, who would’ve thought that a member of the Dark Guild would try to crush the very organization he serves.” [Ryouma]

Ryouma knew from the kidnapers he interrogated that the tunnel had been blown up, so he took a different route and went via one of the other hideouts of the Dark Guild to meet Elia’s convoy from the other side. Thanks to that Ryouma managed to gain a lot of information after crushing said hideout.

When Alphodo heard that, his grim countenance became even grimmer.

“The Dark Guild is a den of evildoers. An organization like that that torments the innocent without cause deserves to be destroyed.” [Alphodo]

“Which is why you targeted Elia. By kidnapping the duke’s daughter you planned to incite a calamity upon the guild, which is also why you went out of your way to contact me, so that you could leave proof that Elia was in fact kidnapped.” [Ryouma]

“It had to be done. The Dark Guild has supporters even among the nobles. The only way to call a calamity upon it is to taint its name with a sin so grave it couldn’t be pardoned.” [Alphodo]

“In other words, the bigger the issue became the better it would be for you... And you found a way to do just that. You made it so that the kidnapers that contacted me would eventually lead to the discovery of the Dark Guild’s storehouses, allowing you to push all the blame onto the kidnapers. You sure used them well, didn’t you, Alphodo? Even me... Unfortunately...” [Ryouma]

Ryouma suddenly looked toward the lamp dangling at Alphodo’s chest as Alphodo chantlessly casted an ice spear toward Ryouma. Ryouma managed to dodge by a hair’s breadth thanks to detecting the trace of magic power, but Alphodo continued with a sword strike to his neck. Again Ryouma dodged, but this time an ice arrow came flying at Ryouma, which he canceled out with his own fire arrow.

In the next instant, Alphodo lifted his sword and slashed down at Ryouma. In response, Ryouma stepped diagonally to the left as he raised his katana up vertically to meet Alphodo’s descending sword. The moment their swords clashed, Ryouma’s katana vanished from Alphodo’s sight, leaving him with nothing to hit but thin air, then

the katana that vanished suddenly descended on his head.

“aA!!!” [Ryouma]

“—!!” [Alphodo]

Right before their swords clashed, Ryouma twisted his body, and as he supported his right hand that was holding his katana, he drew a circular motion with his katana as if he were rowing a boat.

The slight movement of his left hand lifting inclined the katana downwards, allowing him to hit back after shifting his stance.

Alphodo had no backups left. And with his body wounded from his battle with Shiva, though he pushed his body back as soon as he noticed Ryouma’s descending katana, he could not make it in time. As the ki-reinforced katana descended, slashing diagonally downwards until his right side, the chains holding the lamp were cut along the lamp and his armor.

“Huff, huf...! A...” [Alphodo]

Blood spurted as the chains fell down. Alphodo kept his sword facing Ryouma, but being wounded, his gait remained unsteady.

It was then that two shadows suddenly came—

“*Cough!?” [Alphodo]

—Piercing through Alphodo’s neck and heart.

“Ryouma’s not the only one you’re facing.” [Shiva]

“Surely you expected this, right? I mean you did turn your back on us.” [Oslo]

“Ah...A....” [Alphodo]

The two shadows were none other than Shiva and Oslo.

Following after them were Barrack and Nell.

In the midst of all that as the rest of the rescue group gathered their weapons and stood in row, Alphodo quietly took the last of his breath.

TL Note: And with this we've finally finished the first version of TMPG.

To all my readers, thank you for your continued support, the donations, for reading, and for sticking with the series despite the translation sometimes slowing to a crawl.

There are still some leftover donation in the bar, but rest assured, those donations will be carried on to the revised version of TMPG. For the record, I did post some extra chapters after receiving those, but I never counted them against the donation bar because of the lack of a regular schedule...

TMPG Revised: For those of you who don't know, TMPG or The Man Picked up by the Gods was prematurely ended here due to writer's block. The author has been writing a reboot, which I will be picking up. If I recall correctly there shouldn't be a lot of changes in the reboot until Volume 3, at which point, the series will begin to branch off. As of now, there are 113 chapters, 40 of which belong to the 3rd volume. From the date of postings, the series seem to be updated monthly.

神達に拾われた男

1

The man picked up
by the gods

Roy

ILL. りりんら





「時間だよ」

「どうやら準備が整ったようじゃ」

「元気で、楽しくやっていくのよ？」

「ああ、わかった……
本当に、本当に
ありがとうございました!!」

竜馬の体を光の粒子が包み始めた。
光は徐々に強くなり、
竜馬の視界が遮られていく。

神達に拾われた男 1

竜馬の見つけた新種のスライム

その素晴らしい能力に
お嬢様もメイドも大興奮!?





エリーゼ・
ジャミール

ラインハルトの妻である
公爵夫人。
複雑な生い立ちの竜馬に
対して、何かと
親身に接する。

ラインバッハ・
ジャミール

ジャミール公爵家の
先代当主。
森でひっそりと暮らして
いた竜馬を旅に誘う。

ラインハルト・
ジャミール

ジャミール公爵家の
現当主。
森で竜馬に助けられた
ことをきっかけに、
交流を持つようになる。



たけのこ 竜馬
竹林 竜馬

転生者。元は日本の
中年サラリーマン。
神々の加護を受け、異世界
で第二の人生を始める。
趣味は自己鍛錬と使役
したスライムの研究。

エリアリア・
ジャミール

ラインハルトの娘で
公爵令嬢。
明るく素直な性格で、
年の近い竜馬に対して
好意的に接する。
生まれつき魔力量が
とても多い。



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