

三河宗平

Mikawa Souhei

イラスト/Ryota-H

マジックユーザー

Magic-User

TRPGで育てた魔法使いは異世界でも最強だった。

Mayoeru Yosoji no Kenkokuki

~Joushiki ga Jama de Ore TUEE Dekinai~

Arc 3

by Mikawa Souhei

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Chapter 56: Domain Inspection (Part 1)

It was 3 days after that when Irudo and Sedam's party got back.

Though it was one day later than schedule, I didn't particularly go out to greet them. Since it's them, I had faith that they'd be fine.

..... It's a secret that I got a little worried and used [Fly] to look for them up in the sky, alright?



According to Irudo's report, he successfully managed to get the dwarves to agree to deploy personnel to design both the trade route from Jiiteias Castle to Senpu Village and also the collapsed mountain road.

"The architects who will be involved with repairing the mountain road — members of the Daroun clan — have already begun work. They've gone to make living arrangements at Yuule, which they plan on making their base."

"Ou, though small, you have a pretty nice castle, doncha! You Margils, the lord here? Well, let's get along from here on!"

From beside Irudo, who came to diligently give his report, a short, brawny person — a dwarf — pops out.

"Indeed, I am the wizard Margils. You are.....?"

"Pardon my lateness. This is....."

"Hey, sorry, sorry! I'm one of the architects, Valbo Daroun! With that degree of collapse, we can fix it up bright and shiny within 5 days!"

Apparently, each dwarven clan is in charge of a specific type of industry. The Daroun are the architects.

The fact that dwarves excel at construction and smithing hold true in this world as well. I've heard good things about them so far, so I feel that I'm in

good hands.

“I wish to build a lasting friendship with you dwarves. Eventually, I plan on paying Senpu Village a visit.”

“Ahh, come, come! You’re the hero who crushed those Shadow Demons, right? We’ll welcome you anytime!”

Then Valbo returns to the construction site while laughing heartily.

With that, one of my burdens has been resolved.

Eventually, I also want to hire him to work on expansion work on the castle. Especially in regards to the baths.



Two days later, I set off for the villages within my domain.

The members of my delegation are, aside from myself, Irudo, Leiha, Torad, Jiruk, Ted, and Fijika.

Claura and the 4 dark elf sisters will be in charge of protecting the castle in my absence.

When I think of how we would have to split up like this every time there is work to be done away from the castle, I can see how important it is to hire some soldiers.

“The three villages within your domain are called Village of the Pool, Village of Medicine, and Inner Village.”

Irudo is briefing me as we are proceeding along the barely visible trail cutting through the dense forest.

Village of the Pool is the largest amongst the three, but its population is still under 200. Almost all of the inhabitants are woodcutters. They make their living by delivering the timber they cut down to Yuule and selling there.

Village of Medicine is, as can be guessed from its name, located close to several locations where medicinal plants grow in abundance. There are generations of experienced herbalists living here, and this is the only village that travelling merchants actually visit.

The last one, Inner Village, is literally the village located deepest within the forest. Most of the residents of that village make their living from hunting.

“Every single village is like a different character, it seems.”

“Sorry?”

“No, it was nothing.”

Fijika has already gone ahead to inform all of the villages that there’s a new feudal lord, but I wonder how this is going to turn out.

Up until recently, this entire area was technically under the rule of bandits. I hope I don’t get chased out with responses like “we’ve been doing fine by ourselves so far, we don’t need no feudal lord”.....



It was right before twilight when we arrived at the village closest to Jiiteias Castle, Village of the Pool.

True to its name, the village is backed by a huge pond and surrounded by a crude wooden fence. The buildings are all made of wood, and it looks seedy even when compared to Yuule.

“..... So late.”

Fijika, who is wearing leather armor, was waiting for us by the entrance.

A sun-tanned man in the prime of his life is together with her. He must be the Village Head.

“All of us swear allegiance to our new feudal lord.”

Without any prompting, the Village Head easily comes before me, kneels down, then swears his loyalty. But on his face, there is no relief nor hope — only fear and unease.

“Ahh, I will do my utmost to answer to your loyalty. Did my letter get delivered properly?”

The first half was directed to the Village Head, and the second half to Fijika. If the Village Head had read the letter written by Irudo, then I don’t understand why he looks so scared.

“I delivered, properly.”

“Y-, yes mi’lord. We have read it fully. For not, not collecting tax at present..... every single inhabitant of the village, we all express our deepest thanks!”

“Umu.....”

Perhaps they’re suspicious because it sounds too good to be true?

Well, no helping it. They’ll get used to it eventually.



“Magi-..... Wizard-sama.”

“Feudal lord-sama.”

“We swear our allegiance.”

The villagers are all gathered in the square. Upon seeing me, all of them fall prostrate.

It’s great that they’re obedient, but all of them look as scared as the Village Head, so it doesn’t make me feel good at all.

“As I had wrote in my letter to your Village Head, I plan on developing this village alongside Jiiteias Castle. Firstly, I will soon be starting on building a road connecting this village to the castle and the highway. I wish to ask all of you for your help.”

“ “As you command, mi’lord.” ”

After that, the welcome feast began. But just like the villagers’ moods, the tension at the feast remained quite low the entire time.

Both the wine and food being served paled in comparison to what Mora prepares at Jiiteias Castle. I understand that the village itself is poor, so I manage to keep a smile on my face while eating.

For what it’s worth, I did hand the Village Head several tens of gold coins to cover the costs of our visit, but even then, there was a lot more misgiving than gratitude on his face.



That night, I stayed at the Village Head's house.

Though I say Village Head's house, it only had 3 rooms, and the smaller room almost seemed to be growing fur. There was no way to fit 7 people inside, so I was given the entirety of the living room, The Village Head and his family slept in the next room, which looked like it was being used as a storehouse.

Irudo and the rest put up tents in the village square. Of course, I originally also suggested sleeping together with them, but the Village Head got upset saying that he couldn't allow the feudal lord to sleep outside. I had no choice but to take up his offer.

But still, I feel way too apologetic about this. The next village on, let's set up camp outside the village.

In fact, that would probably be even more comfortable than this bed of straw.



"..... Let's just sleep."

The house is immediately encircled by livestock. I close my eyes, hoping to fall asleep as fast as I can and wake up tomorrow.

(..... Still, I'm the feudal lord now, so I have the responsibility to improve these villagers' quality of life from now on, don't I.....?)

"My lord."

"!"

While half awake and half asleep, pondering on my responsibilities as a newly installed feudal lord, I was jolted awake by a sweet, husky voice whispering in my ear.

Within the darkness, I could vaguely make out the body line of a mature lady. I panicked for a brief instant, but judging by the voice and the situation, I understood that it must be Leiha.

"Wh-, what's going on, Leiha?"

"I've captured an assailant."

"A what?"

With sleepiness still on my eyelids, I throw on my robe and step out the house with lighting the tip of my Wizardry Staff with a spell.

In the square in front of the Village Head's house, there are three youngsters thoroughly bound up and rolling around, as well as a young girl prostrating herself.

“..... I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry! It was all my fault!”

“ “Nn—! Nnnn—!” ”

For some reason that I am failing to comprehend, the young girl — now that I take a better look, isn't she the Village Head's daughter? — is bowing repeatedly with tears streaming down her face, while the gagged youngsters are glaring daggers at me while struggling violently.

Irudo and the others who were camping at the same square have already fully woken up and are looking on with amazement.

“What happened here?”

“WHA-, WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED HERE?!”

Flying out of his house later than me by a bit, the Village Head shouts the exact same question as me. Aren't we getting along just fine.

“These three tried to slip into my lord's sleeping quarters while holding weapons in their hands, so I captured them. Your daughter was following along behind the 3 of them.”

“WHAT ON EARTH?! KINA! WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?!”

“But, but, Dad! I..... didn't want to..... so Kelue and the others, they.....”

At Leiha's explanation, the Village Head grabs his daughter's collar and yells at her. While listening to her reply.....

In summary, the Village Head wanted to win favor with me, so he ordered his daughter to 'visit' me in the night. His daughter didn't want to do it, so she went to her 3 childhood friends to ask for advice, and they recklessly decided to just kill me. I think that's about the gist of it?

“Ki-, killing is a bit.....”

“We only planned on th-, threatening you to give up on Kina.....”

“In, in the first place, you’re that bad magician called Jyagul, aren’t you! Like we’d trust you just because you say a few good words!”

A nostalgic name came out from the mouth of one of the young boys that we ungagged.

I can see how isolated from information this village is, being inside the forest and all. They might have heard rumors about me, but I can’t really fault them for confusing me with Jyagul, the previous owner of the castle.

“How do you wish to handle this, Margils-sama?”

“..... Could it be that my decision here would take the place of a trial?”

“This is Margil-sama’s domain, so of course, yes. By the way, for the crime of attempted assassination of the feudal lord, the punishment is of course execution.”

“My lord. As soon as I receive your permission, I will grant them enough pain to make even demons of darkness cry in apology, then execute them.”

Irudo’s common view and Leiha’s extreme view are different in vector, but presenting me the same dilemma.

“..... Kerue, and Sakko, and..... Rai, is it? For the sake of your childhood friend Kina, you wanted to fight against ‘the bad magician,’ right? But did you not consider the possibility that you yourselves might get killed?”

“..... Y-, yes we did..... but.....”

“Jyagul and the bandits already killed a few of my friends and guys from the village! As long as I can carry out revenge for them, I don’t care if I die.....!”

“Ki-, Kina is my important fr-, friend, so.....”

“I’m the one in the wrong! Pl-, please ex-, execute me instead.....”

The three youngsters and girl are desperately conveying different things, all while the Village Head is merely opening and closing his mouth with an ashen face.

I mildly raise my staff to quiet them all, then turn towards Leiha.

“Leiha.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“..... I entrusted the judgment of your crimes to the courts at Lelis. This time too, I will try them by the law.”

“..... It shall be as you say.”

..... But with that said, me = the law? That's way too heavy.

Forcefully suppressing my desire to moan out loud, I spin my mind as fast as I can. Emotionally speaking, I don't feel like punishing them at all.

However, it is true that they tried to assault the feudal lord (depending on the point of view, it could be seen as an attempted assassination even), so I can't let them off scot free.

In the first place, even if they had no intention to murder, the very fact that violence was the first thing that came to their mind is not good.

“.....”

If I myself am to be the law, then I must at least come up with a sentence that everyone can accept.

“You three are being charged with the crime of ‘attempted assault.’ With consideration that I also neglected to resolve the misunderstanding of my identity..... I sentence you three to forced labor at Jiiteias Castle. The period will be 3 years. Your duties will be the harshest position at the castle: being soldiers. Mentally prepare yourselves.”

“We'll be so-, soldiers at the castle?!”

“..... I'll do it. Anything aside from being executed, I'll do it.”

“Th-, thank you so very much.....”

They must have interpreted it as forced conscription purely as a punishment. Their expressions are by no means bright, although there is indeed a slight tinge of relief at not having been executed.

The daughter clung to all three while cry-laughing, so I suppose they're satisfied with that.

The Village Head and other villagers are also patting down their own chests with relief. I personally want to give the Village Head a sentence too, but I suppose I'll have to be satisfied with watching him later get scolded by Irudo at length.

“I think it was a good decision. Since we do need soldiers familiar with the inside of this forest.”

So whispered Irudo to me. Oh, right, there was that too.

Since our castle is a place that has a real likelihood of fighting against Shadow Demons, I might have inadvertently shortened these three boys' lives.

When I think about it like that, my heart feels heavy. But I've already decided to be the feudal lord, and I know this is part of that.



“Rather than that, there are still 2 more villages, huh. I hope I can at least get a proper night's sleep in the next one.....”

“We have no way of knowing. However, it is the duty of the feudal lord to resolve the problems presented by the population living in his domain.”

So replied Irudo seriously in response to my fed up face.

“Irregardless of who that resolution is for, that is.”

Chapter 57: Domain Inspection (Part 2)

Finished with the inspection of Village of the Pond, we moved on to Village of Medicine.

The Village Head of Village of Medicine turned out to be an old granny who was the herbalist for the previous generation. She is both popular with the residents and also quite sharp.

Having learned from last time, I sent Irudo ahead first to fully explain the situation before I arrived, so the negotiations with the Village Head went quite smoothly.

“Though our village is this small, we’ve also been frequently harassed by bandits. If you will protect us from them going here forward, then we would gladly accept your rule.”

“Indeed, let’s both do our parts well.”

The population of Village of Medicine is around 130, so their lifestyle is also pretty tight. Just like with Village of the Pond, I promised them safety and improvement in living standards, then also told them that I won’t be collecting tax for the near while.

Of course, the Village Head and villagers were all overjoyed.

“I’m really sorry, but we actually have one more thing to ask of you.....”

What the small-statured grandma pleaded while shrinking her body was ‘subjugation of the undead.’



Apparently, recently the dead bodies of soldiers have suddenly started to wander about the forest at night. There have been no casualties of yet, due in part to the location being quite a distance from the village, and also because they do not actively seek out and attack people. However, the place where they

appear is right beside a precious medicinal herb gathering spot, so it is causing the village some trouble on the financial end.

“We have nowhere near enough money to hire adventurers..... and neither are we paying taxes to the city or Carbanera Knight Order, so.....”

So well, after saying that much, of course it falls to me, the feudal lord, to take care of this.



For someone used to a modern Japanese city, nighttime in the forest is almost frightening merely in how dark it gets.

However, I can still dimly see my surroundings. Part of the reason is due to the white moonlight filtering through the gaps in the foliage above. Also, our targets are also glowing faintly from phosphorescence.

There are about 20 of ‘them’ picking their way through the woods with uncertain strides. The fact that they are grouped into 2 loose columns only increases the creepiness of the sight.

They’re ‘wights.’

According to the Warrior Priest Torad, the yellow phosphorescence covering the bodies of the dead are the actual main bodies of the wights.

They’re equipped with ragged armor, shield, and sword or spear. With their mummy-like dried up bodies, vacant stares, and intermittent moans, they are truly the walking dead.

“Oh army of the departed! This land is the territory of the living!”

Torad stands square in the path of the marching wights, then raises the holy symbol of the goddess he serves.

After he finishes chanting a passage from scripture, a dazzling light descends upon the group of undead.

“In the name of the Goddess of Winter, Ashuginea, begone, you wights!”

“Ga, a.....”

“..... Fushuu..... Uguruu.....”

“Ooo, it’s Turn Undead.”

Sedam, Jiruk, and I stand ready to support him at a moment’s notice. At the sight, my voice involuntarily slips out.

Bathed in the divine light, the yellow phosphorescence clothing the wights’ bodies seem to evaporate, growing ever thinner until eventually disappearing. Having lost their phosphorescence, the bodies crumple one by one as they return to being mere corpses again.

“..... I have finished confirming. All undead in this area have been wiped out.”

Without a moment’s delay, Leiha activated an area search for enemies, then reported to me.

I am a bit over-excited from seeing the power of a Warrior Priest for the first time, patting Torad on his burly shoulder several times.

“Well done indeed. With this, the misgivings of the inhabitants of Village of Medicine should be allayed.”

“Thank you. But well, it’s just that.....”

The Warrior Priest looks tired but also slightly sad at the same time.

When he uses Turn Undead, it apparently causes him to come into contact with the memories and souls of the targeted undead.

“They were soldiers gathered 10 years ago to fight against Shadow Demons. It seems that the appearance of the nest several days ago was what caused them to reawaken.”

..... Even undeads think of Shadow Demons as enemies, is that how it is?

It’s true that if I compare these wights to Shadow Demons, I feel a lot more hatred towards the living from the latter than the former.

The answer to the question of “what exactly are Shadow Demons?” seems to have grown even farther away after tonight.



The next day.

“Fuu, fuuu.....”

“S-, so tired.....”

“Ze ze..... ze.....”

“You guys’ paces have become uneven! Irregardless of the speed, you can’t do that! One breath per step! Also, don’t change the distance of each step!”

We are going through a shortcut that leads to our final destination, Inner Village.

The three youngsters who were suddenly conscripted from Village of the Pond are currently being instructed by Jiruk while walking.

This isn’t really punishment or harassment. According to Jiruk, it’s the basics of marching practice.

He had apparently been in an army for a while, so for now, I’ve made him their commanding officer and entrusted their education to him.

“80% of a soldier’s job is to walk. However, if the entire army cannot walk the same distance in the same amount of time, then it becomes useless! Starting now, I’m going to pound this into your bodies!”

When I hear ‘a soldier’s training,’ images of assaulting something with swords and spears come to my mind. The real thing turns out to be quite different.

At this rate, even if we increase the number of soldiers to around 50, I think Jiruk can still handle them,



Fortunately, we reached Inner Village before the three new recruits fell over from exhaustion.

This being the smallest village with a population of 120, and added to the fact that it is the most isolated among the three, I had expected it to be quite poor.

In actual fact, the houses here look to be mere dugouts, but the people here have significantly healthier faces and bodies.

According to the Village Head, all of the hunters in this village are quite skilled, so nobody is troubled for meat and pelts.

“Conversely, we are short on vegetables and fruits..... and medicine as well.....”

“I see. I’ll give it some thought. For now, just by building a proper road connecting this village to the castle, there should be some improvement.”

“Ohh, thank you very much.’

The Village Head is a black-haired buff man, as if to emphasize how pro of a hunter he is. Just like with Village of Medicine, I sent Irudo ahead to explain everything, so there were no misunderstandings here and the talks went smoothly.

“Eventually, after the road is finished and the village begins to have a bit of financial leeway, we will bring a portion of our hunted game to the castle as tax.”

“We would be thankful for that. Oh, also..... if there are any who wishes for it, we are looking to hire soldiers to work at the castle. Do you have any youngsters who might be interested?”

It’s not that I gained the taste for it after the incident at Village of the Pond. I’m asking because I’m sure that skilled hunters would definitely be of great help from here on.

“So this is not a forced conscription? I’ll call out to them..... but I think you probably shouldn’t get your hopes up too high.”

“Is that so. Well, this is not compulsory, so don’t take it to heart.”

Guess people in this village are living relatively satisfied lives. Though a side of me is relieved, thinking about how I now have the responsibility of protecting them makes my stomach feel heavy.



Having learned our lesson from the trouble at the start, we decided to not stay at the village.

To that end, I quickly ended my negotiations with the Village Head and we immediately departed for the castle.

Right before we left the village, however, one young man rolled out in front of

me, causing me to stop in my tracks.

“.....”

“M-, my lord!”

“Speak.”

After gesturing for Leiha to step back from the position in front of me that she had wordlessly assumed, I called out to the young man who is prostrating on the ground.

“Thank you for your permission! I am called Nocks, and I live in this village! Please hire me at the castle!”

“Nocks..... is that so.”

When I take a better look, his skin is pale and he looks much skinnier than most of the others in this village. He is bowing repeatedly with a desperate expression on his face.

I look sideways towards the Village Head, as this was different from what he'd said, and I see him nodding as if he'd understood something.

According to the Village Head, this young man had sought shelter in this village ten years ago during the night, together with his merchant father. As the merchant had done a fair amount of trading with the village, they couldn't decline his request out of hand and so agreed to shelter the two of them. However, the father soon died of illness, and the son has continued living in the village as somewhat of a freeloader.

“I tried to learn to hunt, but I don't have the needed physical stamina. I'm currently helping the village out with miscellaneous tasks, but..... I don't want to cause them trouble any further.”

“..... Well then, what can you do?”

“Umm, I can read and write and..... do a little bit of math.”

“Alright, you're hired!”

Yay.



“I, I’m very sorry. To stand in the way of my feudal lord Margils-sama himself.....”

“Hmm, don’t worry about it. It’s true that I’d felt bad about how much work there was that only Irudo could handle. I’ve made up my mind to hire you.”

“Thank you very much! I’ll work as hard as I can!”

Currently, Irudo is handling the negotiations with the dwarves on top of management of the castle and calculation of everybody’s wages, so his share of the work has been quite severe. Having an assistant who is a local should help lighten his load to some degree or another.

After all, even the Village Head also gave his guarantee, saying that “Nocks is absolutely hopeless at hunting and manual labor, but he is quite clever, so I’m sure he’ll be of use to you.”



And with that, even the third village became mine both on paper and in actuality.

Though its size doesn’t give me much expectations in the way of tax return, well, I suppose that would depend on how well I manage it from now on.

For now, I’ve gained 3 soldier candidates and 1 assistant for Irudo, which was a happy miscalculation.

As for Irudo himself, he had immediately headed towards Lelis with young Nocks in tow. It’s for hiring soldiers to protect the castle, and also for procuring the equipment for said soldiers.

..... That guy really is quick on the uptake.



On our way back, our steps have grown a lot lighter. But suddenly, we see a black shape approaching from the front.

The shape turns out to be the youngest of the 4 dark elf sisters that I had tasked with the protection of the castle, Sasara.

“My lord! Leiha-nee! Re-, I have a report!”

“What happened?”

This is bad news for sure. As I'd lost my voice from an overwhelming sense of foreboding, Leiha replies in my stead.

“At the moment, the castle is being blockaded by an unidentified military force. They number around 30. They called themselves wa-, ‘War Tribe’!”

Chapter 58: Unexpected Encounter with the War Tribe

(3rd Person)

Jiiteias Castle, about 6 days after Gio and the rest had left on that domain inspection tour.

This happened several hours before Sasara reached Gio's group in the forest.

Claura Andel was enjoying a cup of tea in her own room in the castle. The eldest of the 4 dark elf sisters, Aruga, was reverently waiting on her.

“..... But still, to restore that amount of collapse in that short period of time. It truly illustrates how frightening the dwarves' abilities are.....”

It was yesterday that the 20 members of the Daroun clan had completed the task of restoring the mountain road that had been destroyed by a [Meteor].

Acting as the proxy of the castle lord, Gio, Claura had already cleared all the paperwork with Valbo and paid all costs in full.

However, letting them go back just like that would reflect badly on the castle's reputation, so she also hosted a banquet for them at night.

It was quite a challenge entertaining 20 dwarves with enormous appetites for both wine and food, but she somehow managed to overcome it with the help of Mora and all the servants and dark elf sisters. Claura herself also successfully carried out her role as a hostess without any problems.

“Indeed. But Okugata-sama, I was more surprised at their voracious appetites.”

As usual, the dark elves are still calling Claura 'Okugata-sama.' Though Gio had given up and Claura never did proactively reject the title, it is clear for all to see that she and Gio are not in a marriage, both in the legal sense as well as the

emotional sense. The dark elves are aware of this. However, they simply could not think of any other title more appropriate to express their reverence for this woman who can confidently speak on the same level with, and also represent, their lord Oluri, he whose very existence they can do nothing but bow down to.

“Okugata-sama!”

A voice that approached a shriek heralded the end of this refined moment.

The youngest of the dark elves, Sasara, flew into the room.

“What is it that has happened?”

“I was on watch! Then I saw a large group of armed people coming our way!”

“ “?! ” ”

Gio’s authority over this castle and its surrounding land was acknowledged by both of the 2 representative forces in the area, the Carbanera Knight Order and the city of Lelis. The fact that an unknown group the scale of a troop is approaching such a castle without any prior communication is clearly unnatural. They could very well be coming here to assault the castle.

The elegant smile of a noble disappeared from Claura’s face, immediately replaced with the cool-headed eyes of a magician.

“Give me more details.”

“N-, they number around 30, and were carrying a flag with a bird that I’d never seen before as a crest. Also, they will reach us in about 30 minutes!”

The most childish of the 4 sisters is Sasara. However, she is a dark elf, and thus is capable of delivering a succinct report that covers only the most important facts.

Claura mentally confirmed all the forces present in the castle.

Mora. Sam and Anna. Zek the carpenter. The four dark elf sisters. The three former magic soldier trainee young boys and girl.

“..... Aruga, call everyone to gather in the central courtyard. Sasara, take Rashil and continue keeping an eye on them..... you’ve done well, but I’m entrusting you with this also, alright?”

“ “Understood, Okugata-sama!” ”



“We still do not know who they are. There is still a possibility that they are a friendly force. However, in anticipation of the worst case, Mora, take the dwarves and everyone else and standby inside the main tower.”

Claura rapidly gave out instructions to everyone who was gathered in the central courtyard.

“I will personally speak with them to confirm their intention. Gilma, stay with me as protection.”

“Roger.”

The dark elf sisters reverently accepted those instructions, but there were some present who were dissatisfied.

“I, I’m sure I can help in some way!” (Mora)

“We can also fight!” (Log)

“We’d be more than happy to assist you!” (Valbo)

Mora, the former magic soldier trainee Log, and the dwarf Valbo all spoke up. However, Claura shook her head.

“The other side is a group of 30 fully armored soldiers. But with that said, it doesn’t look like they have any siege weapons, so they can’t easily infiltrate either. First of all, I will negotiate with them. After that, if we really have to fight..... I will need to borrow everyone’s strength.”

“..... U-, understood.”

“To think that the road we’d restored would bring such calamity.....”

The young man and dwarf nod, then began moving towards the hall in the tower.

Claura then turned towards the defense tower above the main gate, with Gilma following behind. But at that moment.....

“..... Claura-san.”

“Y-, yes?”

Her hand was strongly grabbed from behind. It was Mora.

She knew that the female magician’s hand was shaking. As if hoping to quell that shaking, she clasps Claura’s hands with both of her own and brings it to her own chest.

“It, it’s going to be fine! There was surely just some misunderstanding..... And even if they are bad people..... Gio-san is surely going to return very soon!”

“..... You’re right, of course.”

So said Claura gently while placing her free hand on top of Mora’s head.



“Okugata-sama! They’re almost here!”

Having returned from scouting, Sasara went straight to the defense tower, where Claura was keeping watch.

“..... What bad taste these people have.....”

“..... I’m of the same mind.”

Jiiteias Castle is located on a mountain. To prevent any enemies from sneaking up, the road up had been cleared of all trees and reduced to a narrow, open path.

On that path, heavily armored individuals wielding a large variety of weapons were gradually coming into view.

Their armor truly looked heavy. But instead of the usual plates of metal, their equipment had been painted with garish colors in a red theme, and were outfitted with sharp spikes and blades here and there. Even their helmets and faceguards were decorated with demon-like characteristics.

As a noble of Lelis accustomed to delicate and refreshing art, this esthetic sense was something that Claura absolutely could not approve of. Even Gilma, the dark elf at her side who rarely ever spoke, could not help but to agree.

“Exactly which family is this?”

While maintaining two columns, the group ascended the mountain path until

they reached the open area in front of the castle gates, whereupon they formed ranks. At their head was a crimson standard.

On the standard was a large bird with wings outstretched in intimidation, drawn with vivid colors. As someone belonging to the family of a Count, Claura was familiar with the crests of all noble families and knight orders in both the Liuus Union and the Kingdom of Shulendal. But this one? This one she.....

“Wait, a bird in flight? And also those vivid wings and tail..... Ah!”

A scene flashed inside Claura’s mind.

Ten years ago.

Upon the walls of Lelis, which was bearing the assaults of waves of Shadow Demons. Standing proudly among the standards of other knight orders and military forces, this one.....

“That is the crest of the ‘War Tribe’!”



‘War Tribe.’

The first Bleed, which took place 500 years ago and has almost become legend, was purported to have been overcome in large part thanks to a superhuman that people called ‘hero.’

However, afterwards the ‘hero’ disappeared, no one knowing where to.

Among the nakama that were left behind was one who had received the title ‘Warrior of Darkness.’ Somehow, his descendants became bound with the eternal mission of fighting against Shadow Demons. They are the ones that call themselves ‘War Tribe.’

No one even knows their origin story anymore, but it is a fact that they are still fighting against Shadow Demons to this very day. Ten years ago, Claura had witnessed them firsthand fighting against the Shadow Demons that were assaulting Lelis.

But that aside, due to their worries about Demonists or for some other reason, they never show themselves unless if Shadow Demons are directly involved, and they never divulge their birthplace. As such, it is nigh impossible

to come into contact with them any other time.

“..... And that is all I know about the War Tribe.”

“U—n, then we should be able to get along really well, shouldn't we?”

“It's still too early to tell.”

Claura was explaining to the two dark elves while looking down upon the lone warrior who was making his way to the castle gates with their standard bearer in tow.

When Sasara breathed a sigh of relief, it was Gilma who cautioned her. Claura nodded in agreement.

As the three looked on, the warrior and standard bearer stopped 10m away from the gate.

“..... Hya, he's huge!”

“Isn't he a Shadow Demon?”

Sasara could not be faulted for her surprise, as the man's body was over 2m in height. Even through the countless number of spikes and blades covering his armor, his large, muscular body was still extremely obvious.

Due to the face mask carved in the form of a demon, his face could not be identified.

“I'm Leid. Head Warrior of the War Tribe. I'm here to see your castle lord, Gio Margils.”

The warrior's grave voice rang out heavily.

“Leid? As in, the Shadow Demon Killer.....?”

“Though we don't know for sure if he is that Leid.....”

Ignoring the dark elf sisters who were exchanging glances, Claura stepped towards the edge of the outlook platform.

“I am the chamberlain of this Jiiteias Castle, Claura Andel. Warriors of the War Tribe, know that this unannounced visit is the very epitome of rudeness! First withdraw your troops, then send an emissary. And then, and only then, can we converse like civilized people!”

So replied Claura with her magician's staff in hand. At that, the ranks behind the warrior grew slightly astir.

"We offer our apologies for our rudeness. However, we also have circumstances of our own."

"Exactly what manner of circumstance would that be?"

"We have suspicion that the castle lord Gio Margils may be a Demonist, or perhaps even a Shadow Demon himself. We wish to meet him to ascertain the validity of this suspicion."

Claura's eyebrows shot up to the very limit of how high they could go.

Chapter 59: Omen

(3rd & 1st Person)

“This is too outrageous even for a misunderstanding! The castle lord Margils is the hero who destroyed a Shadow Demon nest on this very land and eliminated all Demonists from the city of Lelis!”

The voice of Claura, who was glaring at the War Tribe warriors from the lookout, surged out with almost enough heat to set the air on fire.

The sharpness was such that it made even the 2 dark elves by her side quiver briefly, but the hulk that was the target of her voice — Head Warrior Leid — did not even flinch.

“It might very well be a misunderstanding. However, by meeting him directly, we will be able to determine whether or not he is a Shadow Demon or Demonist. If he is innocent as you claim, then we wish for him to comply.”

“You cretin! Is that the attitude of someone requesting something?! But if you really must, first have that ill-mannered mob behind you stand down!”

In the face of Claura’s {Fire Arrow}-like sharp tongue, Leid merely stood in place, letting the tirade wash over him as if he was a rock.

After a period of prolonged silence, Claura gestured towards Sasara with an almost imperceptible motion.

“..... Understood, Okugata-sama. I will hurry to inform my lord.”



After the young girl with tanned skin slipped out of the castle with the help of invisibility magic that allowed her to almost melt into shadows, there was also movement among the War Tribe members standing by behind Leid.

Behind the man with the most eye-catching armor, there appeared several

warriors wearing strange equipment.

“There was movement?”

“One dark elf, heading west. My partner is tailing her.”

“Good. Most likely, that’s where Margils is. If he heads back here, don’t do anything. If he flees, report back immediately. Don’t lose him!”

“Yes, sir.”

The lightly armored warrior who bowed to the warrior with the eye-catching armor was wearing a face mask that was strangely enlarged around the eye area. He, and the few others with him, were War Tribe spies called ‘Ear-Eye’s.

Whereas normal men would have difficulty even seeing a dark elf in action, these men were capable of not only seeing, but also tailing said dark elf.

“Call the Head Warrior back. We’ll all rest until the next report comes.”

“Yes, sir.”

The warrior with eye-catching armor — both of his shoulder guards were decorated with a figure made up of 6 eyes, and there were bird tail feathers attached to his back — also gave instructions to a few other warriors.

He was the one who had the highest authority among those present, War General Kanbelis.



In Sedia, naughty children are often threatened with “bad children will get eaten by Shadow Demons~!” The phrase said with the next highest frequency is “children that stay up late will be hunted down by the War Tribe~!”

Despite the absence of any large scale Shadow Demon attacks and overt Demonist activity in the past ten years in the areas around Lake Liuus, this was one thing that had not changed.

No one knew the location of their base, nor their exact number.

What was well known, however, was not only that every single one of them was the equal of a thousand men, but that they possessed unique skills that enabled them to track and hunt down Shadow Demons and Demonists with

great efficiency. If that was all, then they would have been esteemed as the guardians of humanity by one and by all. But no, they were also famed for their ruthlessness. When they discover a Demonist, they would expose him, with zero regard to how well the Demonist had integrated into society, before mercilessly cutting them down. Even for those dreaming of a world without Shadow Demons, the War Tribe was an evil omen of fear.

This was the price that they had to pay for growing to look down on the humans that they had been tasked to protect, as they had come to place supreme priority on “crushing all Shadow Demons and everything else linked to Shadow Demons.” But most of them had yet to realize this.



“Has there been any reaction from the ‘Sight Demon’?”

“None, as of yet.”

After informing the chamberlain lady of a temporary suspension of conversation, Leid had come back. Ignoring Kanbelis, he went straight towards another War Tribe member.

His target was the only person among the group who was wearing a robe instead of armor. In his hand rested a crystal ball the size of a child’s fist. His name was Kyuil, and he was a War Tribe Diviner.

If one took a better look, they would have seen that there is a dark red mass sealed within the crystal ball. This was a secret War Tribe magic item called a ‘Sight Demon’ that possesses the ability to recognize Shadow Demons and those who’ve been affected by Shadow Demons. The mass sealed inside the crystal ball was actually Shadow Demon blood.

“Head Warrior. Shadow Demons and nests aside, in order for the Sight Demon to distinguish a Demonist, direct contact is necessary.”

“..... Which at least means that there are no Shadow Demons nor nests in the vicinity, then.”

“Leid! That conclusion is for me to make.”

“I get it.”

In contrast to Kyuil, whose voice was dispassionate and matter-of-fact, Kanbelis' was cautionary. Leid turned towards the War General who was only about as tall as his chest and bowed slightly.

“Considering that the Miko had imparted a prophecy about this, we must be doubly and triply cautious. If Margils is a mere braggart, or if he — though I find this unlikely — truly is a ‘Great Wizard,’ either way he would be of no concern to us. However, in the one in a million chance that the Sight Demon shows any reaction whatsoever.....”

(T/N: Miko: shrine maiden or priestess)

Hidden underneath heavy armor and thick plating, his throat rang loudly.

“Then it would confirm that he will be the focal point of the next Bleed. Even if we all lose our lives in the process, we must eliminate him here and now.”



After hearing about the state of affairs from Sasara, I pressed on towards Jiiteias Castle with both impatience and anger.

Of course, we did not go in straight from the front like fools. Having heard from Sasara that she had been tailed here, I activated the [Move Outer Plane] spell, then led everyone through the alternate plane.

The negotiation — or whatever that was — had apparently been frozen temporarily, but above anything else, I was just relieved to see that nobody was hurt.

“Rather than that, we should now be thinking about what kind of response to make.”

“..... Yes, let's.”

While feeling both gratitude and respect towards Claura, who is pale-faced but still level-headed, I went straight to the Command Room.

The people that I brought in with me were Sedam, Claura, Torad, Jiruk, and the 5 dark elves.

“When the War Tribe has their eye on you, things get troublesome. Even if we successfully drive them away this time, if word of this gets out, our reputation

would take a nosedive.”

“More like, hasn’t it been 10 years since the War Tribe’s shown up in that large a group? All I’m feeling is foreboding from this.”

“In the first place, what is their basis for claiming that Margils-dono is a Shadow Demon?”

“I don’t know the full details, but they apparently have some special technique or tool that can make the distinction.”

While listening to the conversation between the adventurers, I somehow try to calm my flustered mind.

I drained the cup of Shil tea that Mora had poured for me with a face close to crying in a single gulp. However, I still feel rage boiling deep at the bottom of my stomach.

“..... If that’s the case, then all I need to do is have them use that technique or whatever it is they have to establish that I’m not a Shadow Demon. That’s only if that technique is real, of course.”

“It would indeed be best if everything would be resolved with that. What if they’re just finding something to fault you for in order to remove you from the position of castle lord?”

“If that is truly what they are aiming for, then it would make everything so much simpler. I can just kindly allow them to choose whether they’d prefer being a stone statue or a pig or whatever else.”

“.....”

Everyone’s eyes gather on me, colored with surprise from hearing me express an anger-affected opinion.

“When you stop being calm, things can get out of control, fast. I understand how you feel, but will you please calm down?”

“..... Though in actual fact, we will need to exact some form of reparation for this.”

In response to Sedam’s worried words, Claura shot her own opinion out.

When I take a better look, I realize that the veins on her forehead are clearly bulging. I can tell that she is also currently suppressing a lot of anger inside.

“But with that in mind, I also advise that we aim to build a cordial relationship with them.”

“.....”

Everyone silently nodded agreement to her extremely calm counsel.

She is right, of course. The War Tribe is a group of seasoned warriors who’ve been fighting the Shadow Demons for generations. Considering what my own goal is, they should be people that I would be willing to go to great lengths to acquire.

If they had offered a friendly hand at the very start, I would have taken that hand with nothing but joy in my heart.

Techniques to discover Shadow Demons and Demonists. The know-how regarding how to fight them. There are very few existences who would be more reliable as collaborators in the cause that we share.

“Only if we manage to first clear this misunderstanding, that is.”

“Her earlier point was also quite valid. After having done this much to us, how can we let them go home just like that?”

Reparation, huh.

No matter how strong they might be, it is easy for me to turn them into rocks or pigs. It would be even easier to exterminate them. But well, however full of anger I might be, I’m not actually considering the extermination option.

Of course, I will indeed exact some form of ‘reparation’ for having frightened everyone at the castle. Since, as the castle lord, working on our public image is also part of my duties.....

“Whichever way, it seems that we all agree I must at least first meet with them face to face.”

Everyone exchanged uneasy looks at my conclusion. Oh don’t worry, I won’t suddenly call down a meteor with no warning.

Chapter 60: Focal Point

“..... I feel strong magical power from them.”

So says Clauro irritatedly while glaring at the War Tribe through an observation window.

Magical power, is it? Though I only see one magician-like person among their group.

The fact that the Magician’s Guild’s magic soldier project was considered a breakthrough idea tells me how foreign the idea of a ‘magic warrior’ that uses both magic and weapon is to this world.

“I’ve also seen the War Tribe fight firsthand, though from a distance, but I didn’t see them using anything like magic.”

According to Sedam’s memory, what sets them apart is not magic, but physical abilities beyond normal human limits and the unique equipment that they wear.

“..... Indeed, they are warriors definitely not to be underestimated.”

When I evaluate them with [Sense of Adept], I draw the same conclusion as Sedam’s.

The following is the data that I got from the skill. The Head Warrior, which is the huge guy called ‘Leid,’ is [Human *Male* 28 Years Old / Level 21 Warrior]. The warrior with the most eye-catching get-up is [Human *Male* 48 Years Old / Level 14 Warrior]. The single person wearing a robe is [Human *Male* 40 Years Old / Level 10 Priest]. In short, in comparison to the adventurers and knights that I’d met so far, these people are very significantly different.

The Leid guy is clearly an outlier, but the others are all mostly at least level 8 to 10.

Sedam’s level 9 is the highest among all adventurers belonging to the Lelis

Adventurer's Guild. As for the Carbanera Knight Order, it is Lioria's level 10. When put into this perspective, I understand how the War Tribe is able to fight Shadow Demons.

However, I find it curious how the words 'Warrior' and 'Human' that I see in the displays are slightly distorted. It is the exact same way how the word 'Thief' in Sedam's display is slightly distorted as my spell forcibly tries to interpret his Ranger profession into D&B form. The profession I can understand. I wonder what it means that this distortion can be seen from their race even.

"And to think they could have forced their way into the castle....."

The castle gates can't be broken down that easily. But I find it hard to believe that a group of that size came all the way here without thinking things through. I should expect them to have prepared some method. Mora and Claura, the young children..... when I think again about how much danger they all were in, the anger within me bubbles even fiercer.

"..... Please, please pardon my forwardness, my lord. Anger dulls judgment. I beg of you to suppress your heart."

From her position behind me comes Leiha's whispered word of caution.

Leiha almost never opposes my opinion. When I look at her face and see how apologetic she looks, I breathe out a huge sigh.

"Fuu....."

She's right. The people who led mental health talks back at my company had also said the same thing, that "anger is the root of all trouble."

As someone standing above others, I must control my negative emotions.

"..... You're right, Leiha. My head has cooled down slightly. You have my thanks."

"I am unworthy of such words. If there is still some remaining anger, please feel free to take it out on myself."

"..... I think I'm fine, thanks."



[Protection], [Mana Shield], [Detect Enemy], [Invisible Demon], [Perfect Resistance], [Mind Wall], [Emergency], [Invisible]. And lastly, [Project Illusion].

I cast every single defense spell that I currently have charged. It is a pity that [Physical Boost] is not on the list.

The more recent TRPGs with well-done systems ban consecutive spell casting, but D&B is old school, and thus doesn't have an annoying rule like that.

“Ue.....”

“Wait a-, come on, get ahold of yourself.”

Though no more than 2 minutes of actual time had passed, my Inner World self had descended and ascended that circular staircase 9 times without stopping, so I am understandably feeling a bit fatigued. Claura grabs my arm and supports me when I accidentally stumble.

“Sorry about that. I'm always relying on you so much.”

“..... That's.....”

“Well then, I'll be off. I'm leaving the rest to you all.”

I direct my voice towards Claura, Sedam, and Leiha, then go out through the side door in the castle gate.

At first, everyone had insisted on accompanying me, but I managed to convince them out of it by saying that I can flee much easier by myself if it really comes down to it.



“I am the castle lord of Jiiteias Castle, the wizard Gio Margils. Oh ill-mannered members of the War Tribe. If you wish to converse, then send forth your representative!”

Despite the 30m separating us, the other party is a group of seasoned warriors wearing strangely shaped armor.

My body is almost about to shiver in the face of a different kind of pressure from facing down an army of Shadow Demons. While suppressing that shiver, I slam the butt of my Wizardry Staff against the ground with great force.

“O-, Oh wizard..... I shall be the one to speak with you.”

I had totally expected Leid to come up, but apparently the person in charge is the one in the eye-catching armor.

He boldly walks forward to stand right in front of me, then removes his helmet and face mask.

“I am the War General Kanbelis.”

The man wearing the flashy armor turns out to be a man in the prime of his life with close-cropped black hair. He is completely lit up by [Detect Enemy] in my eyes.

“Very well. I shall hear what you have to say.”

I look straight into his black pupils. I secretly activate the ESP Medal that I’m gripping inside. But to my surprise, he manages to Resist the effects of the item.

Judging by the lack of reaction on his face, I surmise that he hasn’t realized my attempt to use the item. Is he perhaps in possession of some sort of item that increases his resistance against wizardry?

Either way, this is merely one more reason why I cannot let down my guard.

“.....Yo-..... You are under suspicion of being a Shadow Demon or a Demonist. It is as we have already told your chamberlain. If you wish to prove your innocence, we will have you assent to participating in a ‘trial’ of ours.”

(T/N: Kanbelis was about to use omae, which is a coarse way to say ‘you’ (coarse to the point of possibly being disrespectful), then caught himself and switched to kiden, which is a much more formal one, used for equals or superiors.)

“I am aware of the fact that the War Tribe is an entire clan who dedicate their all towards fighting against Shadow Demons. However, I hope you weren’t thinking that would suffice as justification for all this. In the first place, what is your reason for thinking me a Shadow Demon?”

If their technique to determine Shadow Demons or Demonists is indeed real, then I would very much like to learn it. But if that technique identifies me as a Shadow Demon, then doesn’t it mean that it’s just a hoax?

“Then we shall explain. In the first place, we War Tribe are the descendants of the ‘Warrior of Darkness,’ who was the ‘Hero’s nakama.....”

He begins explaining with much more willingness than I had expected. I can almost hear a note of pride mixed into his voice.



It was a telling with a lot of embellishment and detours, but the gist of it was as follows.

- The techniques that the War Tribe use to fight against Shadow Demons were passed down from the ‘Hero’ and ‘Warrior of Darkness.’
- According to the knowledge passed down from the ‘Hero,’ Bleeds emanate from a focal point.
- ‘Focal points’ are thought to be some sort of passage that exists in the depths of a Shadow Demon nest.
- Not long ago, the War Tribe’s Miko received two prophecies from their guardian god. The prophecies said “the focal point shall appear at Mount Foresight” and “the focal point will be a human, going by the name of Margils.”



“I see.”

A silly thought like “How kind and thorough this guardian god is to even name me specifically.” flits across my mind as I slowly mull over the meaning of the information that I’d just been told.

Incidentally, Mount Foresight is what the War Tribe calls this mountain that Jiiteias Castle is on.

But well, ‘focal point,’ huh.

There is a very high chance that the passage within the depths of a Shadow Demon nest is referring to that Door of Wizardry lookalike that I saw that time.

..... Which would give rise to the equation “focal point = passage within the depths of a Shadow Demon nest = Door of Wizardry = me”.

Was I actually a Shadow Demon all along?

In the first place, this body was created by The Overlooker based on my requests. At the very least, it is most likely not wholly human.

On the contrary, if the War Tribe's knowledge or whatever is indeed true, then the next Bleed will occur from me.

I feel the anger that I'd been keeping suppressed inside my stomach dissipating.

This is no time to be angry.

"We have told you everything there is to tell. So, will you assent to our 'trial,' or will you not?"

Exasperated with my silence, Kanbelis presses me for an answer.

Chapter 61: Outcome of the Trial

Now that I'm giving the idea some consideration, a few things do come to mind.

First of all, after The Overlooker 'prepared' my body for this world and transferred me over, why did a Shadow Demon nest spring up so close by?

Why was there something in the Shadow Demon nest similar to the Door of Wizardry, which used to be merely an imaginary construct made up by my long ago friend and me?

Facts that I'd merely written off as coincidence and thrown to the back of my mind now seem to make sense.

A sudden wave of dizziness strikes me, causing me to strengthen my grip on my Wizardry Staff in a fluster to support myself. The red-hot anger that had filled my stomach up till now is all gone, replaced by ice-cold despair.

That is how shocking War General Kanbelis' words are to me.

The Door of Wizardry, though it exists only inside my heart, is a door that connects chaos to this world. If the other side of the Door is actually connected to the Shadow Demons' world.....

Is this world really a black SF, like I had thought at the very start?

If, if I really am this focal point, an existence that will be the trigger for the next Bleed.....

..... Then I need to be eliminated by these guys.

It is a bit surprising how easily I came to accept my own death.

In contrast to Japan, where I had no wife, no kids, and no more living family members, here I have Mora, Claura, Irudo, Sedam, Leiha, and all my other nakama at Jiiteias Castle.

I see, so that's how it is..... I've come to love this world.

Rather than letting them be trampled by Shadow Demons, I would rather.....

"It's about time I hear your answer."

".....!"

Right as I was about to step into a delusion of tragedy, a rough male voice jerks me back to reality.

Coming to a start, I raise my face to see War General Kanbelis staring at me. I had expected him to be angry, but instead he has his eyes open wide in startlement.

"..... Oh, pardon me."

I hurriedly wipe the corner of my eyes with the sleeves of my robe. It seems that I had embarrassingly shed a few tears.

Now that is quite shameful indeed.

However, due to a different emotion entering my heart, which had been completely painted over with despair, my head begins to move again.

If it ever comes down to it, I might truly assent to being killed. But I can't just let go without first doing everything that I can.

"Ah—, in the first place, that Miko of yours. How trustworthy are her prophecies? Are you people not just saying it?"

"A past Miko prophesied the 2nd Bleed before it began 150 years ago. The current generation has also accurately prophesied the locations of powerful Demonists and small-scale Shadow Demon nests several times already. I myself had also followed her prophecies and successfully hunted down a Demonist within Shulendal."

".....Muu....."

That, too, could just be him saying it. However, it is true that the War Tribe has produced actual results throughout the decades.....

"Well then, how about that 'trial'? Shadow Demons aside, can it seriously tell apart even Demonists?"

“The trial will be conducted with a tool called a ‘Sight Demon.’ It is a special crystal ball that has Shadow Demon blood sealed inside, and it will definitely react towards Shadow Demons or individuals affected by Shadow Demons.”

In other words, it should respond to those who had been brainwashed or possessed by Shadow Demons, like Leiha and Baron Koval had been.

Isn't this totally foolproof? If these people actually become my allies.....

“Just now, you mentioned prophecies about small-scale Shadow Demon nests. Was there a prophecy about the nest that had appeared in this land about 2 months ago? Furthermore, it seems that there had been Demonists in Lelis for more than 10 years already, so what about that?”

“..... Not all Demonists and nests are prophesied about. If it was possible to determine them all through prophecies, then we would have completely wiped them out ages ago.”

“.....”

..... No good, I can't find any contradictions or inconsistencies in what he is saying.

Guess I have no more recourse but to entrust myself to the results of this trial of theirs.

If I am really judged to be a Shadow Demon..... dammit, I don't want to die.

“..... I understand. I assent to participating in that trial.”

“Is that so. Excellent.”

“I only have one request. If I truly turn out to be a Shadow Demon or under the influence of a Shadow Demon, I am planning on obediently allowing you guys to kill me. However, before that, may I have just a little bit of time to say farewell to my nakama?”

“Very well, you may. But before we start, I have a question of my own.”

To be honest, I still haven't made up my mind whether I should obediently let myself get killed, or whether I should struggle to survive, even if it means deceiving the War Tribe.

Kanbelis continues after staring at my face for a short while longer.

“We heard from sources in Lelis that you are currently gathering allies at this castle for the sake of fighting against Shadow Demons, and that you eventually plan on forming an alliance with various countries. Is that true?”

I don't know what brought him to ask that question, but thanks to it, my mind is now completely calm.

“That's not quite right. I'm not gathering allies for the sake of fighting against Shadow Demons.”

“Then what are you gathering allies for?”

“I, and my allies, will fight Shadow Demons for the sake of protecting people from all over.”

That's right, I have a goal.

..... There's no way I can accept dying here.



“As of now, we shall begin the War Tribe's 'trial.' The judge shall be Diviner Kyuil. The enforcer shall be Head Warrior Leid. And I, War General Kanbelis, shall be the witness.”

At the open area in front of the main gate.

From among the War Tribe group that is standing by, the man wearing a robe and the conspicuously huge warrior step forward and surround me.

I feel the presence of several people inside the castle spooked by the strange atmosphere and about to dash out, but I wave an arm to stop them.

“Margils-dono, please hold out your right hand, palm upwards.”

Obediently following the expressionless Diviner's instructions, I stick out my hand. He then places a crystal ball on top of it.

Inside the slightly warm, transparent orb is a dark red mass. That must be the Shadow Demon blood that Kanbelis had mentioned.

“.....”

Which reminds me, I didn't ask how the blood is supposed to react if I'm guilty.

Kanbelis at my left swallows his saliva, while Leid at my right readjusts his grip on the handle of the large sword on his back.

"..... So, how is it.....?"

"This is....."

Unable to bear the silence anymore after several tens of seconds, I speak out to the Diviner, who is peering intensely into the Sight Demon.

At that moment.

The clump of blood, which is about the size of the tip of a thumb, twitches.

At first, the movement is slight. However, it quickly grows violent. Up, down, left, right, the clump starts rampaging randomly within the crystal ball like pinwheel firework.

The slight warmth that I had been feeling in my hand is quickly replaced by coolness, and a faint film of condensation is beginning to form on the surface of the crystal ball.

"..... What does this mean?"

"I do not know. I have never seen this kind of reaction before."

At Kanbelis' alarmed question, Kyuil replies with excitement.

"Margils-dono, are you feeling anything?"

"..... Muu?"

Kyuil seems to be gauging something as he has his eyes half-closed while asking me his question. I'm still unsure of exactly what is going on, but as I focus on the rampaging Shadow Demon blood and what I feel through my palm.....

"..... Unease..... and fear, perhaps? I feel this 'blood's..... repulsion and fear towards myself."

I have no other way to explain it than 'instinct,' but I honestly describe what I feel. Kyuil nods, then takes the Sight Demon back from me and stores it away in a breast pocket.

“What does that mean? Is he Shadow Demon or not?”

Leid presses Kyuil with irritation in his voice. Kyuil looks towards Kanbelis in a daze.

“If he had been affected in any way by a Shadow Demon, then the Shadow Demon blood would have accepted him as brethren and thus spread out in an attempt to assimilate with him..... in other words, the Sight Demon would have become dyed completely red. However, this reaction..... it has never been heard of before. The only answer that I can present is that ‘I don’t know.’”

I think over the meaning of Kyuil’s answer for a while, but..... um, so what does it mean?

So he can’t say for sure that I’m not a Shadow Demon?

“In that case, then we can’t lay a hand on him.”

“War General, do you intend on defying the Miko’s orders?!”

“It is not the Miko who gives us orders, but the Council of Elders. Also, the Miko was acting a little strange.”

For some reason, Leid and Kanbelis begins quarreling.

Leid is insisting that regardless of my true identity, I should be dispatched immediately, solely because of the Miko’s prophecy. Kanbelis is retorting that they cannot do that so long as there is no solid proof that I am a Shadow Demon.

To be honest, it’s all quite complicated..... should I simply be happy that I wasn’t judged to be a Shadow Demon?

“Sorry for the wait. We shall now announce the verdict of the trial.”

After leaving me alone for a while as they argued back and forth, finally Kanbelis comes back over.

“In regards to whether or not Gio Margils is a Shadow Demon or a Demonist, the trial shall continue due to a lack of evidence.”

“..... ‘Continue’?”

“Now, we will head straight back to the War Tribe’s ‘Inn’ — what we call our

base — and report the current situation. When we receive new instructions from the Council of Elders or the Miko, then we will be back.”

“..... That sounds like quite a leisurely process. Are you sure it’s alright like this?”

They are leaving the verdict unresolved due to the inexplicable reaction of the Sight Demon, but I myself know about a pretty incriminating piece of evidence — the Door of Wizardry.

Having been convinced of my impending death, frankly speaking, I want to tell them about it. But well, yea, let’s not.

“Of course, we are aware of the possibility of you suddenly transforming into a Shadow Demon due to some stimulus. As such, we will be garrisoning this Head Warrior Leid and 10 of our warriors here at your castle.”

“To monitor me?”

“That’s right. If anything does happen, know that Leid will immediately behead you without hesitation.”

“..... Exactly how I’d like it.”

Would it be strange if I said that this actually makes me feel reassured? With his level, he could probably kill me with a single blow if I wasn’t using any defense spells. But of course, this is only if it ever comes to that.

Oh right, there’s also the reparations that Claura mentioned.

“.....”

I can’t do it. I don’t have the audacity to demand an apology or reparations while still feeling guilty.

“Also, if you ever come across a different lot of Shadow Demons or Demonists..... at your discretion, you may use the warriors however you wish for the sake of protecting people.”

“OI!”

“A-, are you sure?”

Leid is surprised, but I’m surprised too.

While putting his absolutely distasteful helmet back on, Kanbelis smirks.

“Personally speaking, I can’t imagine a crybaby like you being connected to any Shadow Demons. Think of it as payment for your trouble.”

Chapter 62: Letter to the North

War General Kanbelis, as well as the men under his command, left Jiiteias Castle with the War Tribe standard fluttering proudly ahead.

After seeing them off, I returned to the castle together with Head Warrior Leid and the 10 warriors left behind to monitor me.

I first calmed down everyone who looked confused as to what had happened, then apologized earnestly to the dwarves.

The War Tribe warriors insisted on setting up their own camp, so I lent them a portion of the central courtyard.

When everything had somehow settled down somewhat, I gathered my nakama in my own room.



“I’m sorry for having made you guys worried. Please listen to what I have to say.”

I look into Claura’s, Sedam’s, and Leiha’s faces in turn. Unfortunately, it will be quite a while before Irudo gets back.

All of them are looking apprehensive. However, I must tell them the details of the conversation I had with the War Tribe.

As well as what I didn’t tell the War Tribe — the connection between my Door of Wizardry and focal points.

“..... Which is why, in order to ask for the decision of their Council of Elders and Miko, the War Tribe returned to their ‘Inn.’”

I don’t really get the War Tribe’s sense, calling their base an inn. But for now, as it takes about one or two months to make a round trip from Jiiteias Castle to their Inn (Kanbelis wouldn’t tell me its exact location when I asked), I’ve earned a bit of a postponement.

“Focal point, and prophecy, huh. Both sound quite troublesome.”

“Goodness, such thoroughly unpleasant fellows they were, to the very end.”

Of course, I’ve explained that I myself might be a focal point that calls forth Shadow Demons, but Sedam’s and Claura’s first responses are just that. As usual, Leiha refrains from proactively speaking up, but when I look towards her, she says this in a noncommittal tone.

“If you order me to, I can eliminate them any time you want.”

Thank you. But that answer’s a bit off, okay?

“I’m very sorry about having kept quiet about the connection between my Door of Wizardry and the Shadow Demon nest. According to the War Tribe, I might possibly be an existence that calls forth a Bleed..... so.....”

Those who wishes to leave may leave. Though my Reason insists that I should say that, I shut that part of myself up. For I am the worst of the worst, a selfish person who understands that these people would not leave even if I tell them to leave, and thus intends to take advantage of this goodwill of theirs.

And I am also a terrible coward who, when they get hurt because of this, wishes to hide behind the excuse “well this is what they chose.”

The problem of the Shadow Demons has ceased to be a problem of this world, and has become my personal problem.

From here on, instead of me helping them, I’m going to need them to help me.

Which means I need to shoulder the responsibility for whatever it is that is going to happen.

In the end, I have no choice but to be the ‘Great Wizard.’

“..... so I am going to need all of your help to resolve this problem. I leave myself in your capable hands.”

“We got it, no problem.”

“And that’s the way it should be.”

“As Oluri commands, this Shi shall carry out.”

Sedam casually winks. Claura throws her chest out in her usual prideful manner. Leiha places one hand on her chest and bows deeply.

It is the way they say things like this as if it's nothing that makes me love these guys so much.

.....

Oh no, I think I briefly teared up again. It's problematic how tear ducts get looser when the human body ages.



“But still, that story sounds more and more suspicious each time I think about it again.”

When we turned our focus back to this topic, Sedam spoke up first.

“Does it? I was thinking it kind of made some sense.....”

I had been unable to spot any inconsistencies even after shooting various questions at Kanbelis, so now I'm just tilting my head in puzzlement.

“You must be quite a religious person then. Do you really think prophecies are real? Those guys have soldiers capable of tailing a dark elf. With that ability to gather information, they are more than capable of finding Shadow Demon nests or Demonists by themselves.”

“In other words, the difference is between prophecy and investigation?”

“It sounds like you were quite surprised at your own name coming up, but do you know how widely known your name has become in the Liuus Union within the past two months? It should be no surprise whatsoever for them to know your name.”

“It is as Sedam-dono says.”

Sedam's hypothesis was immediately given a stamp of agreement from Leiha the intelligence gathering pro. Hmm, I guess they have a point.

“The thing about having prophesied about the second Bleed also sounds dubious. If they knew about it beforehand, then why couldn't they have prevented it?”

“.....Muu.....”

Claura’s point, now that it’s been given voice, also sounds about right. Why didn’t it come to my mind when I was talking with Kanbelis.

Though I can think of a few possible answers, such as the focal point was running all around the place, or if it was too strong.

“Well, it is true that the War Tribe are experts on Shadow Demons. That’s what happens when you fight in someone else’s arena.”

“If we also start doubting that Sight Demon item, then there would be no end, but..... at the very least, there is no need to completely swallow their whole story this point in time.”

I see. Guess we need to look into the War Tribe’s real intentions or hidden circumstances. And also about Shadow Demons, and the new keyword ‘focal point.’

But when I said this aloud, Sedam and Claura made difficult faces.

“Looking into the War Tribe would be quite difficult.....”

“Since they have almost zero interaction with other people.”

Though I’ve researched about Shadow Demons several times by now, I’ve only ever heard the War Tribe’s name, and nothing else about them. At the moment I have Leid, the ‘War Tribe of War Tribe’ right here beside me (down in the courtyard), but I doubt he’d give me information so readily.

But then a thought occurs to me.

“Then what about the ‘Hero’?”

The War Tribe is descended from the nakama of the Hero, and Kanbelis said that it was the Hero who taught them about the focal point. Though not to the degree of ‘War Tribe,’ ‘Hero’ is also a word that does not come up frequently. It might be equally difficult..... is what I had thought.

“Doesn’t the descendent of the Hero hold peerage or something like that in the Kingdom of Shulendal?”

“..... That he does.”

Sedam got to display his knowledge again.

Oh wow, so there's an actual Hero.

When I open my eyes wide in astonishment, Claura comes into my line of sight. For some reason, her eyes are totally swimming all over the place.

“So, how is it? You have relatives in Shulendal, don't you? Do you know anything about it?”

“..... That's, um..... yeeesss.....”

Claura has a very unusual expression on her face. Upon Sedam's pursuit, she reluctantly tells us.

“..... elder second cousin.”

“Sorry?”

“My great-aunt's grandson. In other words, my elder cousin is the current generation Hero, Aizel Yuzuki Kamil.....”

I had heard previously that Claura has connections to the nobility in Shulendal, but to think that it was straight to the Hero.

Supposedly, she got to meet 'Hero Aizel' just once when she was young. Her own memory is apparently quite fuzzy, but it seems that he should still currently be somewhere in Shulendal. It's generally a problem for the whereabouts of a noble holding peerage to be unknown, but as the direct descendant of the 'Hero' he's supposedly going around helping people and subjugating Shadow Demons.

I was totally convinced that this world didn't have such a game-like character.....

In the end, as the Hero's current whereabouts are unknown, Claura is going to send a letter to her great-aunt requesting her cooperation. Her great-aunt is well-known within Shulendal as an intellectual due to her efforts training up scholars and magicians, so we might even receive some helpful advice from her.

Of course, once the Hero has been located, I intend to go to Shulendal in person.

Furthermore, I also decide to put in a request with the Adventurer's Guild and Magician's Guild to research about focal points and the War Tribe.



After wrapping up that topic, we even discussed about hiring the dwarves for the construction of the trade route to Senpu Village and about the education of the former magic soldier trainees.

The thing about the focal point is a headache indeed, but for now let's consolidate our position one thing at a time.

Chapter 63: The Castle's Guests

In order to send that letter to her great-aunt, Claura immediately set off for Lelis.

Her cooperation would indeed be a grateful thing to have, but because of this I am going to be without the human resource that is Claura for the 8+ days the round trip would require.

Claura will be hiring an adventurer to deliver the letter, but it will be probably be months before we receive a reply.

“Without Claura here, it’s going to be hard to do a lot of things..... or wait, not really?”

She is extremely important in that she becomes the person in charge when Irudo and I are both gone, but normally she doesn’t really have any duties around here.

In the first place, she’s here as a research student from the Magician’s Guild, so her main duty is supposed to be learning golem creation techniques alongside the former magic soldier trainees.....

In terms of the actual running of the castle, Mora is far more indispensable than Claura.

Jiiteias Castle’s cleaning, food, laundry, and maintenance of everyday goods. Every single one of these tasks are so important that the castle would fall apart if they are not performed, and she is directing them all.

I think that this volume of work is too heavy for a 14 year old girl, but every time I spot her, she is happily swinging a mop or kitchen knife, making entries into the account book, or giving out instructions to the servants. In actual fact, due to her efforts we are indeed living very comfortably.

With her and Irudo present, everyone in the General Affairs department of

my company would have been without a job..... is what I'm thinking with a chuckle as I step out into the central courtyard.

Several ropes had been set up between the main tower and the residential hall, on which are numerous freshly-washed sheets and tablecloths and the like. Up to a while ago, I had been hearing Mora and the others' voices while in my personal room in the tower, so I'd come down. However, it seems like the work has already been finished.

When I look around, I spot Mora sitting on a bench placed against the wall of the residential hall.

"She's asleep, it seems."

The young girl is leaning against the wall and sleeping peacefully.

It is almost certain that this is from overwork. With no intention of waking her up, I simply sit next to her without making a sound.

Her official position is Head Maid, but the only maids are the dark elf sisters, who are also concurrently tasked with the castle's inner and outer security. In substance, the servant couple Sam and Anna and the young carpenter Zek are the ones who are actually carrying out the castle's inner tasks.

When Irudo returns, he's going to be together with the soldiers that he's hired. When it comes to that, the load will definitely become too much for her. After the soldiers are here, I'm going to need to immediately discuss with him about increasing the number of servants and maids.

..... And such is the current situation. But though it pains me, I have one more thing I need to ask her to do.

As I look around while sitting on this bench, the War Tribe members working hard at making camp comes into my line of sight.

In consideration of the length of its walls, Jiiteias Castle has very few buildings inside, which means that its central courtyard is quite spacious. It seems that they've staked out 20% of that space as their own territory.

They've all taken off their grotesque horn- and blade-decorated armor, which allows me to see that all of them are tattooed with strange designs.

“Though it really does pain me.....”

I unconsciously murmur to myself while my eyes follow the largest one among them — Head Warrior Leid — as they go about their work.

“Nn..... Umm, is there something you need me to do?”

It seems that Mora had heard me. After letting out a small yawn, she corrects her posture.

“Indeed. I’m sorry to trouble you, but I want those guys, the War Tribe members, to be served the same food as us. Also, their water and change of clothes and everyday goods supplies as well.”

“Hai, no problem! Immediately beginning with tonight’s dinner, we’ll make portions for all those people too.”

These people have been garrisoned here under the pretext of monitoring me. Despite War General Kanbelis’ words, I’m sure their hostility and mistrust would not be dispelled so easily. On the other hand, the first impression from Claura and the others’ side was also the worst.

However, I don’t have the leisure care about such things. If I am to continue fighting Shadow Demons, it is an absolute necessity for me to build a cooperative relationship with them.

I had expected to need to lay all this out in order to convince her to help me, but Mora simply nods without any hesitation whatsoever. She is shining so brightly that I can’t help but to avert my gaze.

“I’m sure it will be hard, but please keep at it for a while longer. I’m going to hire more servants and maids as soon as I can.”

“This much alone is not hard at all! Gio-san is working so hard on so much bigger things, like the world and the Shadow Demons.”

“Is that so..... Thank you.”

She is also, in her own way, doing everything in her power for my sake. At the moment, I have no choice but to depend heavily on her like this, but one day, I will definitely make her happy.

..... I feel sorry towards Irudo, but perhaps this is what it feels like to have a

daughter.



“As long as I’m in the castle, all of you will not be inconvenienced.”

“You won’t win us over with something like that. But well, you have our thanks.”

So I declared while looking up at Leid, the currently half-naked man who towers far above me.

Not that I care, but the bridge of his nose is straight, and the area around his eyes is crisp. He’s handsomer than I’d expected. Not that I care though.

Leid still looks very wary, and the other War Tribe members are exchanging glances after hearing my offer. I am fully aware that there is still a huge gulf between us.

“The food at my castle is delicious, alright? Look forward to it.”

After lightly tapping Leid’s arm, which is literally as thick as a log, I leave their camp.

Next is to negotiate with the dwarves.



“To think that the War Tribe would have their eye on you, what a misfortune it is!”

So said Valbo, the clan head of the Daroun clan, as we sat together in the castle hall.

Their attitude is that without being properly judged to be a Shadow Demon, merely being suspected is of no import.

“I apologize for having even caused trouble for you all. At the very least, please allow me to add a little extra to your payment for this job.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it! Or at least, that’s what I want to say, but if someone’s giving us gold, we’d never turn it down!”

It seems that they are in good spirits.

“Speaking of which, we heard from Irudo that you’re thinking of some outrageous job, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I want to open a trade route from this castle to Senpu Village. Will you lend me your help?”

“You can bet on it! It’s been a long while since we’ve had a job worth doing, our hands are just itching to get started! But.”

“But?”

Valbo lifts his moustache-covered face and looks at me as if testing me. In contrast to the time with Leid, I’m now looking downwards, but I’d heard that it’s insulting to crouch in front of a dwarf, so I merely prompt him to finish his thought.

“It should be obvious, but it will require a stupidly crazy amount of capital and time. Irudo mentioned it briefly, but..... you have something in mind for that?”

“Indeed I do. Allow me to show you now.”



“As I am unlearned in these matters, correct me if I’m wrong, but the greatest cost in terms of labor and time for this job would be the felling of the trees in the forest, is that right?”

“You got that right. Next highest costs, as we’ll be laying out a road in these mountains, will be the clearing of the land and the transporting of construction material.”

I am currently outside the gates of Jiiteias Castle together with the dwarves.

After hearing Valbo’s reply, I nod, then begin chanting a spell.

“..... So you’re the one.....”

My Inner World self is currently staring intently at the black door right in front..... this Door of Wizardry.

Up to now, I had thought of this as the source of Gio Margils’ power. It used to be the most reliable thing ever, but now it reflects in my eyes as a symbol of ill omen.

“No, that’s not right..... What happens could very well be up to me. This is not a focal point that calls forth Shadow Demons, but my Door of Wizardry.”

Placing my hand over the door and tracing its characteristic engravings, I murmur out loud as if to convince myself.

Despite that, I still feel slightly nervous as I descend the spiral staircase and head for the archive on the 7th Floor. As I release the power of chaos sealed within one of the books there, my real world self finishes chanting.

“By means of this spell, may 3 Forest Giants be created and be under my control for 1 hour. [Create Monster]”

“Nn? Nnn?”

The air in front of us distorts, and from that area gigantic figures ooze into view. During that time, the dwarves’ originally narrowed eyes grow wide enough to seemingly be in danger of having their eyeballs fall out.

“Uo..... UOOOOOO.....!”

“Gi-, gi- gia-.....”

“Magic? Is this illusionary magic?!”

“I must have drunk too much.....”

“WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?!”

In representation of all the stunned dwarves, Valbo grabs the hem of my robe and pulls it.

In front of us, there are now 3 men — Forest Giants — more than 8m tall wearing leather armor and standing at ease.

“These are Forest Giants. They are existences that I created just now with a spell. They would listen to anything I order them to do, which means I can order them to carry out your instructions.”

“Wha-, what a..... You mean to say that we can use these to work on the construction?!”

“Indeed. If needed, I can make 6 more right now. Tomorrow and onwards, I can prepare 27 of them. But I actually want to leave some room to use other

spells, so I would appreciate it very much if you guys can make do with only 9 every day.”

The Level 7 spell [Create Monster] is, exactly as its name says, a spell that creates monsters into the caster’s employ.

However, only normal monsters can be summoned — no undead, no demons, and no races that possess unique abilities.

The number and level of monsters that can be summoned through one usage of the spell cannot be higher than the caster’s level. In my case, I’m Level 36, so I can summon 36 x Level 1, 3 x Level 12, 1 x Level 10 and 2 x Level 13, *etc.* The combination can be freely adjusted.

Forest Giants are Level 12, so it’s just perfect.

“..... By means of this spell, may the effects of the spell [Create Monster] be extended. [Infinity]”

I then applied the effects of the Level 8 spell [Infinity].

[Create Monster] is an incredibly useful spell, but its maximum duration is only 1 hour. However, [Infinity] is able to prolong the effects of another specified spell.

If it is a low level spell, then it could cause it to practically last forever. For high level spells, it increases the ‘unit’ of its time duration.

In other words, if the unit of the duration was in ‘seconds,’ then it becomes ‘minutes.’ ‘Hours’ turns to ‘days.’

With this, these Forest Giants will continue to exist and be useable for an entire day.

Almost as if these Forest Giants are already aware of their mission, what they are carrying over their shoulders are not any normal weapons.

Even this part can be customized by the caster, so this spell is seriously really useful.

“Since the aim is to clear the forest and level the ground, I’ve equipped them with axe, pickaxe, and hoe, as you can see. If anything else is needed, just say the word. I can change it starting tomorrow. So..... how is it?”

“Oh wa wa..... u, o, ooOOOHHHAH!”

Upon seeing the three Forest Giants respectfully kneeling before us, Valbo’s utterances of astonishment gradually turn into resounding laughter.

“Uhahaha! Gahaha! How unconventional! Borrowing the strength of giants to do construction work, this is the very pinnacle of unconventionality! But you know what!”

His eyes are glittering so brightly with ambition that I can almost feel his gaze boring into me.

“With them holding such huge-ass tools, we can’t very do well a normal construction job. The ancestors of our Daroun clan will never allow it, and neither will I!”

Seeing that some of the other dwarves are still looking daunted, Valbo pumps his fist into the air in fierce encouragement.

“We’re gonna do it! The best construction job ever! At the fastest speed! With the highest quality! At the lowest cost! A shiny road stretching from this castle to Senpu Village, and even connecting it to the Road of Law! DAROUN!”

“OOHHH!”

“Chief! Count me in!”

“DAROUN! DAROUN!”

I had merely thought “oh hey, this would be great if it would work,” but it seems that I have totally set their hearts as architects on fire.

With them like this, I think I can also eventually get them to help expand the castle and install a proper bath.

While grinning broadly at the memory of an enjoyable Japanese-style bathtub, I cheerfully wave my hand at everyone who had rushed to the castle walls and lookouts at the dwarves’ shouts.

Chapter 64: The Wizard's and Dwarf's City Planning

Starting the next day, the dwarves of the Daroun clan began work with tremendous fervor.

But with that said, it's not like they immediately went straight to construction.

Some were tasked with surveying and confirming the exact topography between Jiiteias Castle and Senpu Village. Some began planning and listing the needed raw materials and tools, as well as drafting a plan for the transportation of said materials to the work site. And of course, then there were those drawing the actual architectural blueprints.

The dwarves proved to be far, far more sophisticated than humans in terms of civil engineering and metallurgy techniques. And they had overflowing passion, attacking even the boring foundational preparations with seemingly bottomless energy.

When they showed me the list of tools that they were going to prepare, I even saw human-powered cranes and elevators that used pulleys and cogwheels.

Dwarves are freaking amazing.



Even while the foundational preparation was going on, the Forest Giants were being utilized effectively.

In order to secure the necessary open space for the safekeeping and transporting of raw materials, they were first tasked with clearing all of the nearby trees.

Huge trees wide enough to need several adults to encircle lasted no more

than 3 minutes against these 8m tall giants and their gigantic axes. After the tree falls, it gets picked up by another Forest Giant, who quickly removes all the branches and turns it into a log. The more than 3m long roots left inside the ground are get mercilessly attacked with a pickaxe, following which a hoe immediately smooths over the gaping hole and makes the ground all even.

The logs and branches were naturally stocked up, to be used later as the castle's fuel source and also to build temporary lodgings for the workers.

I can just imagine how much flak we would get in modern Japan for this amount of environmental destruction.

Incidentally, what I originally had in mind was just a plain, unpaved road. But due to the Forest Giants' incredible work efficiency and the dwarves' sudden increase in motivation, the plans were upgraded to an extravagant, two lane wide road with stone paving and even outfitted with drainage. It wasn't me who said to do this, they just up and changed it on their own initiative.



“Oooi, Margils! Wizard! Take a look at this!”

Amongst all that, the dwarves brought a suggestion to me as the castle lord.

Apparently not satisfied with only building the road for the trade route, what they brought to me was a blueprint for a massive scale reclamation of the area around Jiiteias Castle and the design of a surrounding town.

“This is quite grand indeed.....”

I am mulling over the blueprints that the Daroun Clan Chief Valbo had laid in front of me with his face beaming with confidence.

According to these diagrams, a large area around the castle would be leveled, and on that ground would be built inns, residential homes, storehouses, and many other facilities. Of course, the entire area would be surrounded by a castle wall, and the castle itself would also be expanded by about 30%. The entirety of Mount Foresight would become a single fortress city about 10 times the current size of Jiiteias Castle.

According to the penned in numbers, the population capacity of this city

would be 1,000 plus 500 visitors. The castle itself would be able to hold 500 soldiers.

“Uhaha! With those Giants as reinforcement, being unable to do this degree of work would get me beaten to a pulp by my ancestors!”

“I think it looks fine, but..... this project, how long and how much money is it going to cost?”

“The time would be greatly reduced..... It’s good timing that the entirety of the Daroun clan isn’t handling any large jobs at the moment. No more than 3 years! But the cost wouldn’t get changed much, since we’d still need the same amount of stone and iron. Hmm, it’ll be about this much.”

So saying, he spreads his thick, tough hand all the way open.

“500,000 gold coins?”

“Nah, 5 million.”

Umm..... this doesn’t mean much, but if I were to convert it into yen, then it’d be 50 billion yen. Not that you can build a city in Japan with only 50 billion in Japan though.

But fact is, even I don’t have that much money on hand in my Infinity Bag.

I cross my arms and wrack my brain about how this 5 million gold coins job can be achieved.

It’s not really that I want to live in a huge castle, but the desire to develop my domain has already taken seed inside me.

“If would be great if a good stone quarry just conveniently happened to be found nearby, but.....”

“..... Stone?”

A lightbulb went off inside my head at the dwarf’s mutter.

Though it’s another rule-breaking idea that any castle lord who built his castle in the proper way would shout abuse at me for.



“By means of this spell, may there be a firm wall of stone before me of

thickness 60cm, width 15m, and height 5m. [Wall of Stone]”

“Uoh!?”

Just like before, we are in the open area outside the castle. After my chant, a seamless wall made of pure stone appears before us.

Valbo is taken back for a second, but immediately dashes over to the stone wall and begins touching and slapping it.

“Ooh, this is good! It’s a bit too hard, but there is no fault at all! Though it takes the fun out of it, the processing time would be greatly shortened, and there will also be no problems in regards to durability! Oi, how many stone walls like this can you create?!”

“I can’t produce it infinitely, unfortunately.”

“Y-, yea I guess so..... But with only this amount, it wouldn’t affect the overall —”

“Only 9 times everyday. With the same dimensions, I can also make 9 iron walls everyday.”

“IRON TOO?!”

[Wall of Stone] and [Wall of Iron] are Level 5 and 6 spells, respectively, so the maximum charges I can prepare for each of them are 9 per day.

Since there’s no fighting going on, there should be no problem if I just continue to mass produce stone and iron while these peaceful days last. But if I think about having to do this everyday for the next 3 years until the completion of the project, I do feel slightly overwhelmed.

“For now, the construction of the city area can be done with wood. There is also no need to rebuild the main tower of the castle.....”

“Well, the houses can be built later as the number of residents grows.....”

And in this matter, Valbo and I considered and discussed various ways to lower the cost of this project. In the end.....

“Period will be 1 year. Total cost, 3.5 million coin coins.”

The amount is slightly beyond my current capital, but I’m sure selling one or

two magic items would be enough to cover the remainder.

This timeline was not calculated with the assumption that I'd be devoted to generating resources everyday without rest. We would easily be able to meet the deadline even if I make a few business trips now and then.

In terms of priority, the road building is top, but it seems that we'll be able to get started on this new project a few months later.



Of course, I don't have the heart to decide something like this at my own discretion.

After Irudo and Claura came back from their respective trips, I gathered everyone and consulted with them, at which they all indicated their approval. According to Irudo, "With that quality of a road, we will be able to grasp all of the trade flowing to Senpu Village. It is going to generate a very significant amount of revenue."

As the castle grows, the number of things that I have to protect also grows, but well..... that's for me to work hard at, yep.



"Uhahahah. I can't wait to start.....!"

"Ahh, sorry. There's something else that I also want to ask you for."

When I told Valbo that we are officially undertaking this huge project that is much larger in scale than anything they had done recently, his mood ascended beyond 'high spirits' and into the realm of 'creepily high tension.'

I shared with him what had also been on my mind.

In other words, it's about the installation of a bath, and a way to lower the amount of labor for Mora and the rest.

"Hou, despite being a human, you understand the wonderfulness of baths?"

People in this world do have a custom of bathing, but it is not regarded as importantly as it is in modern Japan. Most everyone just swim in cold water or wipe themselves down with hot water, so there is not much of soaking in a

bathtub.

I had spotted two public bathhouses in Lelis, but the nuance was that those places were mainly for sickly or elderly people.

In contrast, as the dwarves do a lot of work underground, they get quite dirty everyday, and they also have a lot more opportunity to come into contact with hotsprings, so they've come to highly regard the custom of bathing.

“Very much so. Baths are important.”

I shook hands with Valbo with much more passion than when deciding about the city planning.

“If that's the case, then we can make one or even two baths for you as a service. Fortunately, we have plenty of wood and stone. Are you fine with using coal as the heat source?”

“Yes please.”

To my surprise, they had already developed an early version of a boiler than runs on coal. Furthermore, they're also using the “heavy fire water” that spouts from the ground for lighting and as fuel.

..... At this pace, they might already be close to steam engines and muskets.

“And aside from that..... water drawing and laundry both seem to be quite heavy labor, can something be done about it?”

There is a well inside the castle, but it's a simple bucket design, and I remember seeing Mora struggling quite a bit with it.

“If that's the case, we can install a pump for you. This one we'd have to charge you for, though. After that, well..... if there's a water source somewhere on that mountain, then we can make a water wheel or aqueduct. Oh, and we can also build a windmill, though it would be a bit expensive.”

If money can make everyone's work easier, then whatever the price is, it'll still be cheap.

But seriously..... dwarves are incredibly freaking amazing.

Chapter 65: Mora's Fight (3rd Person)

This happened the day after the War Tribe came.

The mornings of Mora and the other behind-the-scenes workers of Jiiteias Castle begin very early.

Today also she slipped out of her bed right before dawn.

After quickly washing her face and changing, she headed first towards the kitchen. As Head Maid, it is her responsibility to light up the hearth, which can be said to be the heart of the kitchen.

By the time she had finished the preparations for breakfast together with Anna and the former magic soldier trainee boys, the sun had already peeked over the horizon.

Next, Mora brought a bucket filled with newly boiled water and a towel to the main tower.

It is rare for the castle lord Gio to get up by himself. The job of waking him up and helping him get ready is something that Mora never leaves to anyone else.

The stew and bread left over from last night would be their breakfast for today.

On days with nice weather, the servants and soldiers bring tables and benches out to the central courtyard and eat there. The adventurers and castle lord take it in the hall of the main tower.

Mora and the four dark elf sisters eat only after servicing the castle lord until he finishes his.

At the beginning, Gio was troubled about the treatment at mealtime that he wasn't used to, but after the girls put their foot down and refused to budge, now he's used to it.

After breakfast got cleaned up, then it was time for laundry, cleaning of the interior of the castle, and maintenance.

Laundry is mainly left to the former magic soldier trainees, Log, Teru, and Daya.

Sheets, tablecloths, towels, underclothes, and the like are gathered from all around the castle and thrown into a huge laundry bucket, which is then filled with detergent made of lye and then either stomped or struck with a laundry stick.

Though it is the dry season, the water from the well still proved to be quite cold, causing the young boys' hands to turn red.

"How long do we have to keep doing this kind of thing anyways?"

"I know, right."

"Ehh? But I think we're being treated really, really well though....."

The vigorous leader Log grumbled out loud, at which Daya, the young girl burning with hatred against Shadow Demons expressed her agreement. Then the timid Teru chided them both, completing the pattern that had been repeating quite often recently.

"But I mean, we left the Training Facility to come here to learn how to make golems, right?"

"It's already been 2 weeks, and all we've been doing is just chores....."

"It, it can't be helped. Margils-sama looks to be really busy too....."

"That's right! Gio-san is very busy!"

Mora roughly musses up Log's black hair, as his hand that was brandishing the laundry stick had gone still.

"Wa-, stop it please!"

"We've only just moved into the castle, so everyone's still busy, alright?"

"Uu....."

With a red face, Log tried to protest, but he was no match for Mora, who was admonishing him like an older sister. In actuality, he is 12, and she is 14, so

they're only 2 years apart.

“But don't worry, all of you are still very much on Gio-san's mind. Before, he said to me that “I feel very sorry that I can't seem to make the time to look over those kids.” He hasn't forgotten about you all.”

“Is, is that so.....”

“And compared to the Training Facility, this place is way better!”

“That's right! So move your hands! Once the laundry has been hung up, you all can take a break until lunch preparations!”



Lunch for today turned out to be bread, bean potage, sausage, and boiled egg.

With a practiced hand, Anna smeared plenty of butter on the bread, and Mora distributed the potage into bowls. A few of the dark elf sisters came back and helped the young boys with the setting.

“Mm? Ojou-sama, isn't the amount today more than usual?”

“It's already been like this starting from yesterday's dinner.”

As the eldest sister Aruga wasn't informed, Mora filled her in.

Per the castle lord's instructions, Leid and the War Tribe members that have been garrisoned in the castle since yesterday were also going to be given food same as everyone else. Which meant 11 more portions for every meal.

“Ehhh, we're going to give food to those people also?”

To Aruga, these people who accused her Oluri of being a Shadow Demon were practically enemies. She puffed her cheeks in displeasure.

“Yes we will. Because if we don't get along with the War Tribe people..... with everybody in the world, then we can't win against the Shadow Demons!”

“Uu..... I understand, Mora ojou-sama.”

With a smile on her face, Mora continued heaping bread and sausages onto a large plate. The dark elves of course knew their Oluri's goal, so Aruga also helped out, despite still feeling reluctant.



War Tribe members do not often get to stay in proper cities or inns.

They are frequently chasing Shadow Demons through the wilderness, or cornering Demonists who have burrowed into society.

Therefore, their camping and cooking skills are as well-developed as their fighting techniques. Their equipment is also fully assorted.

The tents that were set up in a corner of the courtyard inside Jiiteias Castle were made by first erecting a light, durable wooden frame, which was then covered by large pieces of leather that had been painted over with unique animal fat. With this set up, they are firm, have great insulation, and are also quite spacious inside.

But that's from the point of view of the War Tribe members with normal body sizes.

The large-bodied Head Warrior Leid who is more than 2m in height is looking extremely cramped as he folds his body to exit the tent.

“..... What a weird feeling.”

He mutters to himself while looking around the courtyard that seems so empty beside the long, sturdy castle walls.

In the middle of the courtyard illuminated by warm sunlight, there are young boys and girls hanging up white sheets and clothes. Bright, high-pitched voices belonging to children reverberate in the air.

When he looks towards the castle gates, he just happens to see the three youngsters who were recently conscripted returning from their marching training.

Even while being lectured by a middle-aged warrior about something or other, they make their way to the well, where they upend water over their heads and let out satisfied shouts. None of the things that come to his mind when he thinks about soldiers or warriors can be seen here — no harsh shouting, no disparagement, no tension, nothing to be tenacious against, and most of all, no anger.

For him, 'fighting' is solely a means to destroy Shadow Demons, and training means constant enduring while vomiting blood and burning with rage. And whatever else it is, it is not the scene in front of him.

Nearby, the other War Tribe members are earnestly going about their daily tasks, such as maintaining their weapons, but it feels like they are the ones who are out of place here.

The lord of this castle had also publicly declared that he would fight against Shadow Demons, but Leid cannot see any indication of that intention in this place.

"Head Warrior, all of us have completed our inspection."

"Mm....."

A warrior who had long been in his service had come to report to him, but he only nodded vaguely in acknowledgement. Their 'target' is right there in front of their eyes, but whether he should really be eliminated or not..... having the Trial turn out the way it did was a first even for Leid.

"Should we do some practising? Or perhaps we should go procure food supplies....."

"No practising, and no procuring. Consider our current situation as being in the middle of battle. That guy might reveal his identity at any moment."

"..... Yes, sir!"

Constantly be prepared to fight at any given moment. For the War Tribe, that state is almost a default.

At that moment.

"Good morning~!"

They are addressed by a bright, young voice.

The owner of the voice is a young girl wearing a maid uniform, accompanied by two dark elves and a pair of middle-aged man and woman pushing a service cart fully loaded with freshly-baked bread and soup.

"Ohh....."

“What a nice smell.”

He heard a faint commotion from the warriors that had been silently standing by. The warriors who are capable of standing literally stock still for an entire day if ordered to.

“Today’s bread was made with plenty of white wheat, so it’s sweet and very delicious~ The potage is also filled with lots of spices~”

She speedily gives orders to the dark elves, even while personally walking around and passing out bread and soup to the warriors. Though a bit stiff, the dark elves and servants are also going about setting things up.

Ever since last night’s dinner, the castle lord has arranged for them to be provided with food, so this was not unexpected.

“Here you go, Leid-san. I think everyone’s waiting for you to start, right?”

“..... Ahh.”

The young, brown-haired girl stops in front of him and hands him his portion while tilting her head.

The thick, fragrant smell of wheat and butter tickles his nose, causing him to reflexively accept the bread.

No matter how prepared they may be, even the War Tribe do not carry bread ovens around.

Freshly-baked bread is something that he can eat only either while staying at the Inn, or when infiltrating human society under the guise of a fake identity. But of course, while in the middle of a chase, he has no leisure to enjoy the taste of his food.

“.....”

Without looking at the girl, he takes a bite out of the bread in his hand. The taste of butter spreads throughout his entire mouth.

“..... This is delicious.”

“That’s only because you can’t make something this complicated while camping.”

“Ah, please give me one more piece of bread!”

After seeing their Head Warrior take the first bite, the others shove their own portions into their mouths and bite into sausages with great zest. They had even been given honey to go with the bread, so voices asking for seconds shoot up one after the other.

“It’s like I’m dreaming……”

The embarrassed voice of one of his younger warriors reaches Leid’s ears.

This situation of having females bravely serving them even while knowing their real identities is indeed almost like a dream.

For they are those who lurk in the shadows of human society hunting Demonists.

The way normal humans look at it, the neighbor that they had been close with could be dead the next morning, having been branded a Demonist. Though they understand the causal relationship with their head, the appearance of a War Tribe member is often tied to Shadow Demons somehow, so he understands how the humans feel towards them.

In Sedia, people in power do not lift their hands against the War Tribe. Rather, they even guarantee the Tribe’s right to speak directly to anyone from guard to feudal lord. But despite that, the eyes that are directed towards them are only ever filled with fear and hatred.

The words that Leid’s superior had once said to him are still fresh in his mind.

“There is no place where it is fine for a War Tribe person to be. As a War Tribe member, the only place to be is the place where duty bounds you to.”

“You…… are you fine?”

Leid unconsciously calls out to Mora, who is rushing by here and there in front of him.

“Sorry?”

“Aren’t you scared of us?”

Though it hasn’t even been a full day, he’s already understood how much this

young girl and the dark elves adore this castle's lord. They must be reluctantly obeying his command, doing all this even though they don't want to. Or rather, in Leid's mind, that is the only way things can be.

“Not at all!”

“.....!”

The girl immediately replies strongly and assertively. Her voice isn't just bright like from before.

It is the voice of someone with the resolve of pouring everything they have into realizing a goal.

“My mom was also killed by Shadow Demons. That's why I'll do anything if it's for the sake of Gio-san's.....Margils-sama's goal.”

The young girl with a dignified face gradually reddens from having gathered the attention of all the nearby warriors and servants.

“Ahaha..... sorry about saying something weird. But well, I heard that the War Tribe warriors are also working hard at fighting against the Shadow Demons..... and since we're in the castle together anyways, so we might as well get along well — is what I think.....”

“.....”

The words of a young girl who doesn't even reach his chest caused the strongest warrior of the War Tribe to be frozen stock still.

Chapter 66: Goddess of Winter

Several days after the dwarves began work on the highway construction.

According to Valbo's request, every morning I have been casting 9 [Create Monster], [Infinity], [Wall of Stone], and [Wall of Iron].

In other words, everyday there have been 27 Forest Giants fiercely cutting down trees and digging away at the mountain. The thunderous noise from this was in no way inferior to that of construction sites in modern Japan.

The original timeline that had been drafted with the Giants' work pace already incorporated was shortened even further. Everything is proceeding smoothly.

It's just that..... after coming to this world, I had gotten used to the overwhelming lack of human-made noise, so..... well, in short, it's really noisy.



"I'm really sorry that I haven't been able to get to you guys until now."

"Ah, um, it's fine....."

In the midst of the ongoing noisiness, I am now with all of the former magic soldier trainees.

We are in the hall of the main tower, which is a significantly quieter place.

Although I had heard from Mora that they had been getting a bit impatient, I still couldn't help but to prioritize other things ahead of them, so the first thing I do is properly apologize to them.

"Even we see how hard you are working for the others, so we understand that there's no helping putting us off for a little while."

"We're totally fine."

To my relief, it's not only the normally obedient Teru, but even Log and Daya

are displaying surprisingly acceptive attitudes. I suspect Mora must have helped put in a word or two on my behalf.

More like, when I give it a more serious consideration, I realize that these three are literally the youngest in the castle. I really ought to give them more attention.

“From now on, I am going to teaching you three the techniques needed to make golems. But of course, I’m not going to cram it all into one session. This will be a long process, during which you will also have to help out around the castle..... is that fine with you all?”

“Compared to the Training Facility, this is so much easier, so we’re fine.”

“Good answer. Then first of all, I’ll give this to you guys. I’m sorry that there’s only one copy, you guys will have to take turns reading it.”

I hand a book to Log.

It is The Primer for Alchemists, from the Alchemist Tool Set.

The contents are as the cover says. It was written by me and my Game Master friend long ago based on the D&B rulebook, meant to be a pretend alchemist manual.

Thanks to The Overlooker, it has already been ‘translated’ to this world’s written language, which was thoughtful of him.

But seriously, Overlooker, dude. If you’re going to do it thoughtfully anyways, then I would have really appreciated you thoughtfully removing the depressing and thorny elements too.

“Ummm.....”

While I’m absorbed with such thoughts, Teru calls out to me reservedly. For some reason, Log and Daya are looking downwards.

“Yes, what is it?”

“We can’t read it.”

“Nn?”

It was Log who brusquely replied in place of the troubled-looking Teru.

“None of us knows how to read, so.....”

Daya also looks depressed. Which reminds me, I haven't given thought to this world's literacy rate. Mora can handle not only reading and writing but also basic arithmetic, so I ended up letting my guard.

“Wait, but..... didn't they teach you at the Training Facility?”

“No they didn't.....”

It sounded like the program needed smarter applicants, so you could have at least taught them how to read and write, Heldol..... Or maybe he thought to dedicate even that time to strengthening their magic?

“..... We, um, are we not needed anymore.....?”

As I was feeling righteously indignant about the Magician's Guild's sloppy educational policy, Log hesitantly questions me. Oh no, looks like I've made them worried.

“That's silly, no way that'd be true.”

“But..... since we can't study.....”

Log and Daya are hanging their heads, while Teru is looking anxious.

“In that case, then let's start with having you three learn how to read and write. Let me think.....”

I can comprehend this world's language, but since I'm lacking in the common sense here, I'm not suitable to teach them. In the first place, I can't even free up that much time. Sedam and Irudo both seem like they could teach, but I need them to focus on their current duties. And of course, I cannot burden Mora even more than she already is.

For a second, Claura's face floats up in my mind, but to be safe let's just go with Torad for this.

“That's.....”

“Yes, what is it? If it's about Torad, I'm sure he'll teach you kindly, so there's no need to worry.”

“Tha-, that's not it. Um, why are you being so nice to us.....?”

So asks Log in a quiet voice. What I see in his black eyes is suspicion more than unease.

Up to now, they have continuously been dragged around at the convenience of adults, so I suppose that reaction is only natural.

I had acknowledged his strong will to fight against Shadow Demons. This arrangement was also due to my negotiations with the Magician's Guild. These are proper reasons that I don't think a bad idea to tell him straight. But.

"What do you think I am? A Great Wizard would never abandon a child."



"I see, I understand. Those kids have also been on my mind a bit."

When I went to consult with Torad about this new duty that I had decided on my own, he very quickly accepted it.

"I will bring them up to be devout followers of Ashuginea for you to see."

"Oi."

"Hahaha, I was joking."

Thinking about it, the priests in this world draw their power from the various gods, so those gods probably do exist.

I reflexively retorted like how I would in Japan, but I should probably fix my habit of thinking that religion = questionable.

"Speaking of which, Ashuginea is the Goddess of Winter, right?"

"Yes, she is. What about it?"

"I can't seem to match the element of 'winter' to being the guardian goddess who offers protection against Shadow Demons. Is there some story behind it?"

As my view on religion is still that of a Japanese person, I had intended to not really get into this world's mythologies.

However, now I want absolutely whatever information I can find about focal points. If the goddess Ashuginea is somehow tied to the Shadow Demons, then perhaps I might be able to find a hint. Furthermore, I might also learn something about The Overlooker.

“Hmm, well, Ashuginea being a guardian goddess actually doesn’t really have much to do with Shadow Demons.”

Oi, it doesn’t?

“What it is more connected to is..... Margils-dono, do you know about the ‘dragon people’?”

“Nope, not a thing. So they exist in Sedia?”

Did a really amazing keyword pop up all of a sudden?

I kind of want to hear about it, kind of don’t want to hear about it.....

But the gentle Torad kindly gives me an explanation.

“It seems that they are in an empire that exists on another continent south of Sedia. They are a race that possesses intelligence equal to, or perhaps even higher than that of humans. 200 years ago, that ‘Dragon Empire’ arrived at the southern tip of Sedia and began setting up a colony. At the time, that area was land belonging to Ran Bolt [Southern Country of the God of War].”

Oh man, isn’t that totally an outbreak of war flag?

“At first, the Dragon Empire paid Ran Bolt tribute and also started trading, so Ran Bolt gradually ceded them land. But 50 years ago, the Dragon Empire started to invade.”

See?

I think the Shadow Demons alone are enough to fill my quota of such people. More like, why haven’t I heard about this earlier?

(It was only quite a while after this that I learned there is also a country of giants far in the north.....)

“At first, Ran Bolt was losing very badly and kept losing large pieces of land. However, the Empire’s advance suddenly faltered.”

“Hou?”

“It turns out that the dragon people are weak against the cold. After coming north, they learned that they couldn’t stand ‘winter.’ No matter how hard they fought in the summer, they would inevitably become unable to move and get

pushed back during wintertime. After this repeated for several years, finally they asked for a ceasefire.”

“I see. So that’s how the idea that ‘winter protects’ came to be.”

Which reminds me, I think I’d previously heard from someone that there are massive mountain ranges down south that cause sharp climate changes.

“Exactly. It is also said that during winter, the Shadow Demons also don’t move about as actively. And this is why Ashuginea is fervently worshipped as the wife of the God of War, Rangah, who is the chief god of Ran Balt, the country whose name means ‘Southern Country of the God of War’.”

“Fuumu.”

While looking at Torad’s proud face, only one thought came to my mind.

“Hey, Torad.”

“Yes?”

“Is that ceasefire still going on right now? On the off chance, it’s not that they are actually gearing up for some massive scale invasion, right?”

“Hahaha. The ceasefire has already been in place for almost 50 years. By the name of Ashuginea, the Goddess of Winter, I assure you there’s no way.”

Are you sure?

I’m counting on you, Goddess of Winter-sama.....

Chapter 67: Jiiteias Castle - Medium Term

Let's roll time back a little bit.

Irudo has finally come back, with the soldiers that he had hired in Lelis in tow.

I'm watching them coming through the castle gates one by one, but their suspicious behavior catches my eye.

"Leiha, why are they all looking around so restlessly? Like they've entered enemy territory or something."

As I address her while looking out at the courtyard from my window, I hear soft footsteps from where no one had been previously.

I recently realized that that is her signal to me that she had deactivated her invisibility magic.

"Most likely, they saw the construction — the Forest Giants — on their way here."

"Ah, so that's why."

At Leiha's serious answer delivered respectfully while on one knee, I hit my hands together with a 'pon.'

It's true that at the moment, the sounds of trees being chopped with giant axes are still reverberating like explosions beyond the castle walls. Seeing 27 Forest Giants as tall as the average house in Lelis working on civil engineering work under instructions from dwarves must be a shocking sight indeed.

They've probably already heard rumors about me before, but seeing something like that with their own eyes makes it much easier for me to talk to them afterwards, so I suppose it's good timing.



Irudo came to call me, so I descend the main tower and face the new arrivals.

“ “Margils! Great Wizard Margils!” ”

The moment I appear, the 30 soldiers lined up neatly in the central courtyard begin calling my name repeatedly in unison.

There are also some new servants that Irudo had hired, so the impact of the scene is quite something indeed.

Thanks to my experience handling the guards and crowds at Lelis, my voice comes out fine.

“I am Gio Margils, the lord of Jiiteias Castle.”

A shiver runs through my abdomen.

These 30 young people in front of me, I do not even yet know their names. They are ‘soldiers.’ When we fight against Shadow Demons, I intend on standing at the front myself, but it is still a given that they will be in battles where their lives would be on the line.

I cannot assume the attitude that ‘the lives of my earlier companions are precious, but the lives of these soldiers are light.’

I powerfully slam the butt of my Wizardry Staff against the ground, using it to support myself. Irudo is standing slightly behind me to my side, Leiha is kneeling at a distance away, and I can see Mora tightly clenching her fists on the other side of the soldiers.

I approach the young man standing at the head of the ranks. He looks only around 20 years old. His youthful face is dyed red with excitement, and his eyes are sparkling while looking at me.

“Your name?”

“Lend, sir! Margils-sama!”

“Lend, I place myself in your hands.”

As I thrust out a hand, his eyes grow wide with surprise. Only after quickly wiping his hand on his pants does he grasp my hand with strength.

It is impossible for me to build a deep relationship with all of them, but the least I can do is remember all of their names and faces.

“And you?”

“Sir! I’m Daaz! Margils-sama! It’s an honor, sir!”

“And you?”

.....

After shaking hands with even the servants, I once again return to the stone steps in front of the main tower, and look over all of them.

“People have continuously been threatened by Shadow Demons, and that has been an unshakable truth. But we have gathered here to overturn that which was thought unshakable! Everyone, lend me your strength!”

“ “MARGILS! MARGILS!” ”

The shouts of acclamation echo around the castle.



“Everyone seems quite..... enthusiastic? Or dare I say, fanatic?”

“I’m sure that’s the case.”

After the troop inspection, I had Irudo come to my room to deliver his end of mission report.

When he went through the Council of Lelis to recruit soldiers, a whopping 300 people applied.

The current 30 were selected after Irudo personally interviewed and screened all of them.

“Experience and physical strength were indeed factors, but what I valued most was how much Margils-sama’s goal resonates with them.”

As a result, those 30 spots were almost monopolized by those who’ve had family members killed by Shadow Demons. Naturally, those who are only blinded by revenge against Shadow Demons are useless as soldiers, so Irudo didn’t hire any of those.

“Which is why half of them do not have any actual combat experience..... I’m deeply sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. More like, that way is better. You live up to my expectations every time.”

Though I say that, their passionate loyalty does make me feel a little apologetic. It’s better than being made light of, but I wonder if the thought that blind acceptance is not so good either is merely a Japanese opinion?

Similarly, the ladies employed as servants are also mainly widows who had lost their husbands because of Shadow Demons.

“Here is a comprehensive list of the soldiers, the other people that were employed at my discretion, and the items that I purchased.”

The memo that he proffers is as follows:

Employed Personnel

- Soldiers: 30 (all male, in their 20’s to 30’s)
- Servants: 5 (middle-aged females)
- Barn Manager: 1 (prime-aged male)
- Barn Assistant: 1 (adolescent male)

Items Purchased

- Equipment for the soldiers: 40 sets (spares included)
- Tools & raw materials needed for equipment maintenance
- Uniform, clothing, and bedding for the soldiers: 40 sets
- Various livestock (dairy cow, pig, chicken)
- Rideable horses: 5
- Transport carriage: 1

“Mora and the others were about to reach their limit, so the increase in servants was a necessity anyways. What is this about a Barn Manager.....?”

“He and his assistant will be taking care of all of the livestock and rideable horses. Pigs and chickens aside, a professional will be needed to take care of the horses.”

“Your arrangements are perfect.”

“I beg your pardon, but I disagree. To be honest, I also wanted to get ahold of a healer and an accountant. Unfortunately, I was unable to do so due to the limited amount of time.”

“You’ve got a point. Hmm, speaking of which, we’ve bought the tools to maintain equipment with, but what about a blacksmith to do the actual repairing?”

“We do indeed need a blacksmith, but since we’ll need to go to Senpu Village anyways, I thought it would be better to hire a dwarven blacksmith.”

Ohh, I see. The architect clan already is in possession of such skill, so I think I can hold quite some expectation for dwarven blacksmiths. I wonder if they can make things like mithril swords.

The expenses climbed up quite significantly due to the addition of 40 sets of equipment and the horses and what not, but even that amount seemed paltry after I went and signed the deal on a construction job worth 3.5 million gold coins.

As a more pressing concern, I realized that these new numbers have brought us above the capacity of the residential hall.

I ended up having to put Nocks together with Irudo, but we are definitely going to need to add a new wing or something if we are going to hire any more people.



I have now filled my pressing need for soldiers and servants. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that I’ve assembled most of the facilities and equipment and personnel needed for Jiiteias Castle to run as intended.

As such, I decided to have a meeting to facilitate the castle fulfilling its purpose. It was Irudo who advised me to do so.

“The very bare minimum of our duty is to maintain the public order of the area around the castle. Therefore, we will need to organize periodic patrols to the Road of Law and the three villages within the domain.”

Irudo efficiently explained the main point.

“30 soldiers..... if we include those conscripted from Village of the Pond, then 33. Guess we have enough to somehow make do.”

“I would like to focus on training them at the castle.”

“Would it be a good idea to have the dark elves continue their policing in parallel with the soldiers’ patrols?”

With everyone exchanging constructive opinions, the new arrangements were decided upon without me having to say anything.

Firstly, Jiruk will become the soldiers’ Commander, taking responsibility for training and leading them. Ted will be the Vice-Commander, taking charge of small-scale squads to perform domain patrol as marching practice.

Sedam will be providing Ranger training to the 3 conscripted youngsters, but will generally be on standby at the castle. Fijika and Torad together are the reserves in case something happens during a patrol.

As before, the dark elves will remain in charge of security inside and outside the castle, and also help with maid work in shifts.

While on standby, Torad will be teaching Log and the kids how to read and write. If any of the soldiers or servants also wish to take Torad-sensei’s classes, they may do so to the degree where their work would not be affected.

Irudo would, of course, be the Steward and manage everything that happens behind the scenes of the castle. He was quite happy about how able Nocks proved himself to be while in Lelis.

“But allow me to say this, castle lord-sama. I can somehow manage 30 people, but if the scale gets any larger, then I won’t be able to command them all.”

“Umu.....”

So said Jiruk while shrugging his shoulders.

If the castle expands any further in scale, then adding to the number of soldiers will be a necessity. As Claura had said before, we are still in need of a strategist, and I also need to continue gathering top echelon-class companions.

“..... By the way, I seem to be the only one who wasn't assigned any role at all.....?”

Indeed, Claura had already returned from her mission of sending out a letter to her grand-aunt from Lelis.

There seemed to be the slightest tinge of unease in Claura's eyes as she glared at Irudo.

“Claura-san is already Margils-sama's magic adviser and confidante, so I thought to leave you free from any other duties.”

“There is no need for Okugata-sama to waste her time on any of the miscellaneous tasks.”

As Irudo's nonchalant explanation overlapped with Leiha's earnest opinion, Claura sharply turned her head to the side.

“Well, with our castle lord-sama as ignorant of the ways of the world as he is, I understand how he would need an adviser like myself.”

“That is exactly right. Which is why we immediately need Claura-san to accompany Margils-sama.”

“Hah? Where to?”

“Senpu Village.”

In order to open this trade route with the dwarves, we need to hold negotiations with them.

Though Irudo has already obtained basic consent, the finalities need to be settled between the actual people in charge.

On top of that, I also want to set up that anti-Shadow Demon alliance together with them. I've already witnessed their engineering prowess, and the strength of dwarven warriors in this world is the same as I had expected.

Then there is one last thing. That plan that is still only in my head — the establishment of a direct route stretching from Jiiteias Castle to the city of Filsand in the east — needs a proper evaluation, and to do that I would indeed need to visit the place in person.

The task of turning Jiiteias Castle into a solid foothold for myself has already been completed.

From here on will be the start of the huge project of expanding the alliance for fighting against Shadow Demons.

Chapter 68: Super Gigantic Dwarf of the Wilderness

During the few days when the new soldiers and servants were getting used to the castle, nothing much of note happened.

The soldiers were surprised at the War Tribe warriors camping out in the central courtyard, but didn't raise much of a fuss.

Just in the one in a million chance, I asked Leid if he would help with the training of the new soldiers, but of course he refused.



With everything at the castle settling down, it became time to set off for Senpu Village.

The people coming along with me this time are: Irudo to handle the actual negotiations, Claura as my adviser, Ted and three soldiers as escorts and luggage porters, and of course Leiha.

Sedam, the other adventurers, and the dark elf sisters were needed for the castle's defense and the soldiers' training, so they stayed behind.

Furthermore.

“If it ever comes to it, it is my mission to cut off your head.”

So declared Leid with a serious face. If this line had been spoken by a pretty female swordswoman then I would have called it tsundere, but this was Leid and he meant it 100%.

However, being under watch by the War Tribe would be terrible for appearances so I objected with all I had. He eventually agreed to go along as a normal warrior, wearing normal armor. What a relief that he's not completely inflexible after all.

“That’s Margils-sama’s luggage, so don’t you dare to handle it roughly!”

“Understood, Aniki!”

“And that’s Claura-san’s luggage! Handle it more carefully!”

“Sorry about that, Aniki.”

The three who are following(?) Ted as ‘Aniki’ are the youngsters that we had conscripted in our visit to Village of the Pond. As they were originally carpenters, they have both stamina and willpower, so they’ve been able to properly keep up with Jiruk’s training. At the moment, they are still serving out their punishment for the crime of attempted violence against me, but if they continue working seriously like this, then I’m thinking of officially hiring them and giving them a proper salary.



We used the road newly opened up by the Forest Giants to get through the forest east of Jiiteias Castle.

Although the laying of the flagstones was still incomplete, the road itself was already more than good enough to travel on.

After leaving the forest, we went north a bit to find the road connecting Yuule Village to Senpu Village, only after which could we resume going east. Indeed it was a pretty large detour.

Going by this route, it would take 5 to 6 days to reach Senpu Village. The new trade route would be able to shorten that by 3 whole days.



“Sakko! Grab that part and pull~”

“Got it~”

“Aniki, I’ve finished gathering the firewood!”

When you get used to journeys that take several days, it becomes nothing more than a fight against boredom.

But then again, the only reason why I’m thinking that is because I don’t have to help out at all with setting up camp and preparing food, so I feel extremely

bad about it.

As I watch the three youngsters doing all the prep work under Ted's instructions, I understand that it's faster and more efficient without my help, so I guess there's no helping it.

Thinking about it from the other side, if we didn't have the minimum number of personnel — these 4 — then Irudo and Clauro and I would have had to do all that work and carry all the luggage by ourselves.

That would be kind of pathetic for the lord of a castle..... alright, let's just leave this to them then.

And of course Leid would not even eat with us, much less help with setting up camp.



In order to use our time effectively, I decided to do a bit of reviewing.

"Irudo, I want you to tell me something."

"Yes, of course. What do you want to know?"

"It's about the city of Filsand, to the east of Senpu Village. What kind of city is it?"

Indeed, it's the city even further east of Senpu Village that I'm thinking of extending the Jiiteias Castle trade route to.

From a simple introduction that I had previously heard from Sedam, it's a metropolis belonging to Feldi [New Kingdom of the East] that thrives on maritime trade.

"Let me see. It is apparently a metropolis that is thriving on maritime trade. If I remember right, it is connected by ocean to countries even further east than Feldi itself, Ran Balt, and also Shulendal."

"That sounds like quite something indeed....."

"Indeed it is. However, its routes towards Ran Balt and Shulendal both pass through territory under the rule of the Dragon Empire, so apparently the costs are extremely high."

“The dragon people again..... Incidentally, is there any trade going on between Senpu Village and Filsand?”

“Barely..... is probably the most apt descriptor. In the first place, it’s rare for dwarves to trade with humans. But of course, there might be other reasons that I’m not aware of.”

If there are, then I need to investigate those reasons.

If it’s just something simple like monsters being in the way and making passage difficult, then it can be easily resolved.

The construction itself can also be handled somehow with the dwarves’ cooperation and my wizardry.

“Now I have a ‘what if’ question. What if there is a road that cuts straight across the middle of the continent, connecting Filsand to Senpu Village, then to Jiiteias Castle? What would happen then?”

After explaining to this point, Irudo catches onto what I’m thinking. He looks at me with a start, then nods deeply.

“That..... would be an extremely effective route. Currently, there are some caravans and merchants heading to Filsand through the Plains of Twilight. However, most of them suffer great losses due to attacks by undead or bandits. If a safe route is established that leads right to Jiiteias Castle.....”

The normally overly calm Irudo gulps audibly.

“..... It would bring an absurd amount of profit.”

Umu umu. With Irudo’s stamp of approval, I feel a lot more confident about my plan.

“It is a plan feasible only due to Margils’ beyond common sense wizardry. However.....”

Having joined our conversation halfway through, Claura crosses her arms and adds her own input.

“I do not know the full details, but apparently Filsand, being the large city it is, also has its share of problems. The first is that the duke who controls it has a bad relationship with the Feldian king. And also, that city is under frequent

attacks by barbaric tribes. At least, those are the rumors that I've heard."

"Fumuu....."

The alliance that I am working to set up between countries is not a usual military alliance, but one whose sole purpose is to fight against Shadow Demons. All members of this alliance must be treated as equals. In other words, I don't really want to be involved with civil rebellions and national power struggles and the like.

"But well, let's put that aside for now."

"Nn?"

"This is what 'buying the spurs before the swift horse' means. Before worrying about that, what we have to focus on at the moment is forming that alliance with Senpu Village, right?"

Irudo and I had to nod in agreement with what was most likely this world's idiom equivalent of 'don't count your chickens before they hatch.'



Several uneventful days passed as we steadily made progress toward Senpu Village, going along a road that passes by numerous huge rocks and runs up and down large slopes.. We are finally about half a day away from Senpu Village.

As the road is currently sandwiched between two cliffs, Leiha had gone ahead first.

"My lord! There is a strange figure in front.....!"

She is now back with a strange look on her face.

"It almost looks like a giant..... please be on your guard."

"Giant?!"

Claura and I reach for our staves, Ted and the young soldiers their weapons. Leid unsheathes his huge sword and comes to my side.

"It does not seem like it has noticed us yet, but..... it is moving about erratically."

".....?"

“Whatever it is, let’s take a look.”

If it is a monster that is simply huge in size, then it wouldn’t be much of a threat. Rather, types that are fast and have numbers are the scary ones.

Seeing the usually calm and composed Leiha being so flustered, we all move to higher ground and carefully peek over.

The first thing that we see are two mountains lined up like a wall far in the distance. One of them is most likely a volcano, as there is smoke rising up from somewhere near its peak.

Then, at a considerable distance in front of those two mountains, there is a rocky mountain about a third of their size. I can’t see distinctly due to it being so far away, but I think I see a lot of artificial items attached to the rocky mountain. Since this road clearly leads straight towards that mountain, it is most likely Senpu Village.

Then.

“..... What is that.....”

“Human? But then.....”

“Its proportions are all wrong.”

Claura, Leid, and I are staring intently at a human-like..... something. It has two fat arms and legs, a short and stout torso, and looks uncouth but very strong.

It is standing roughly midway between us and the rocky mountain. In order to reach the mountain, we would have to pass underneath the legs of that figure.

With the road and nearby rocks as comparison, it is clearly.....

“It’s gigantic.”

“I believe it is about twice the size of those Forest Giants under my lord’s employ.”

So commentates Leiha with a serious face.

Despite what I said earlier about not being scared of monsters with only size on their side, this was unexpected. It’s almost the size of a mobile suit, isn’t it.

What also draws our eyes are several circular shapes in the vicinity that, though not as large as the humanoid figure, are still of very considerable size. The most apt description I can think of are the ferris wheels at amusement parks. There are 5 or 6 of those things standing up straight on the ground, rotating even at this very moment.

“Is, it moving?”

“Muu.....”

Not the circular shapes, the humanoid figure.

Slowly, it raises a single arm in a jerky motion, then bends both knees..... straightening back up..... and a variety of other movements that I don't know whether to call dancing or exercising.

“Aa-, Anikiii, aren't we in a pinch?”

“D-, don't be stupid. Margils-sama can take care of something like that in one shot, alright? One shot!”

The soldiers are growing restless, but Ted barely manages to hold them in check. Thankfully, the figure is not displaying any intention of coming our way, but.....

“Have the dwarves been raising a giant like that? Or perhaps are they being attacked.....”

“U-, umm, Margils-sama.”

As we are exchanging looks at this completely unexpected encounter, Irudo calls out to me.

“If I remember correctly, Margils-sama, you carry an item that allows you to observe things from far away, do you not? Please use it to take a proper look.”

Oh right, I do have the Telescope Lens on me.

I pull out the item that is effectively a telescope from my sling bag and peer into it.....

“Let's see, let's see.....”

What I see through the lens is a 'super gigantic dwarf statue' dancing with

strange moves, with water wheels turning in the background.

Chapter 69: The Miraculous Senpu Village

“So biiiiggg.....”

“This is..... quite breathtaking.....”

After progressing for about an hour, we’ve finally reached the foot of the ‘super gigantic dwarf statue.’

Leid is currently standing right beside me, with his mouth open just like mine. I had thought his towering stature of 2m was huge, but this is on a whole different dimension.

If I remember correctly, the large Buddha that I had once saw at Nara was about 18 meters in height. This is much larger, probably more than 30m altogether.

(T/N: He’s referring to the statue in the Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden) in Toudai-ji, a famous Buddhist temple complex in Nara. It’s the place with tons of deer roaming outside. The statue’s height is actually only 14.98m, according to Wikipedia.)

Looking up close, I see that the design is that of a curiously symbolic dwarf. The statue has a barrel-like body, round and large head, thick and long arms, and short legs. The entire thing looks to be made of polished stone.

“This is unbelievable.....”

“Awesommeeee.....”

“How on earth did they made something like this?”

The three newcomer soldiers are awestruck.

After coming out of their forest, they first got to see Forest Giants, then now a stone giant..... They sure are busy.

Go go go go.

Like so.

Accompanied by a deep rumbling that reverberates to our stomachs, the statue above us begins shifting its upper body.

“It’s moving again.....”

“Even the torso can rotate?”

Indeed, this stone statue is not simply large in size. As if it is exercising, it also throws its hands and feet around, and also rotates its neck and body. However, it is not a golem nor a monster (Claura confirmed for us that there is no magic being used).

“I find myself amazed anew every time I see it again. I’m glad that you two also seem to have taken a liking to it.”

For some reason, Irudo is looking kind of proud.

When I think about it again, he’s surely been to Senpu Village numerous times in the past for business, so he must have known about this statue ahead of time.

“Rather than having taken a liking, I think I’m more..... taken aback.”

“Was it the dwarves who built this?”

“Yes, that is correct. Apparently, it took them 15 years to complete it.”

“The fact that it’s moving..... Are those what’s generating the dynamic force?”

After Leid’s question, Irudo next nods in response to mine.

More like, Leid sure is talkative today. Usually he’s taciturn and just stays silent the whole time.

“That is also correct. Through some mechanism, the rotation of those water wheels transfers the force to the statue. I’m afraid I am not familiar with the exact details.....”

“However, with the size of those water wheels, how can they generate enough force to move the statue?”

Behind the dwarf statue, there are four water wheels almost 4m in height. They are all lined up beside an aqueduct reaching out from the rocky mountain

over yonder, spinning gracefully due to the water flowing down.

I myself was satisfied just knowing that that's where the force was being generated, but Leid is passionately questioning Irudo.

"It was a long time ago that I heard the explanation, but apparently they're using gears or pulleys or something like that."

"Hou..... dwarves really are amazing."

Now the statue is beginning to raise both hands (it seems like it would take about 30 minutes for it to complete this motion). Staring upwards, I mutter to myself while feeling thoroughly impressed.

"If it's gears and pulleys, even we War Tribe are using them."

Something must have to come his mind, as Leid takes out the crossbow that had been on his back alongside his greatsword.

It's my first time looking intently at a War Tribe weapon. Not just the body, even the bow and string are made of metal. There is a handle that apparently needs to be wound to draw the string.

"..... I..... see?"

"....."

I agree that the weapon looks powerful indeed, but I'm puzzled as to why he's taking it out at this timing. But then I notice Irudo standing behind Leid and making meaningful eye contact. Me, Leid, crossbow, dwarf statue —his gaze is busily rotating between those directions.....

Ahhh, so that's what he's trying to say?

"Looks like the War Tribe's technology prowess is just as advanced as the dwarves'. Very impressive indeed."

"Fun..... The War Tribe's technology is for fighting Shadow Demons, after all."

While muttering something incomprehensible, he returns his crossbow to his back. Is he perhaps being bashful?

"..... So why did the dwarves go to the trouble of making this distasteful statue? What meaning does it hold?"

Claura finally opens her mouth after having stayed silent up to now.

“Well, I’ve also asked that question myself, but.....”

Upon asking about the meaning of this stone statue, the answer that the dwarves of the Daroun clan had given him was apparently “Meaning? There’s no meaning at all. We just wanted to make something awesome.”

“I, I guess it kind of serves as the symbolic landmark of Senpu Village.....?”
(Irudo)

“Mm, they seem to be quite the romanticists.” (Gio)

“..... Muu.” (Leid)

The dwarves’ high technological prowess is one thing. I find myself also very much impressed with their way of thinking of that “we will make this thing simply because we want to make this thing.” They are not simply engineers, but also artists. In a way, that’s almost like a noble.....

Leid also nods with a somewhat satisfied expression.

At which point —

“..... What is that even supposed to mean? These dwarves seem to be quite a strange lot, don’t they.”

“It is as you say.”

Claura and Leiha appear unable to comprehend, and are simply giving us and the dwarf statue cold stares.



As the aqueduct stretched straight towards Senpu Village, there was no need for any clearer guide. We simply followed it, and our destination just naturally drew closer to us.

After seeing the landmark ‘super gigantic hydropower dwarf statue,’ we won’t be surprised by much else.....is what I would say, but actually it’s more like I was excited about seeing what the next amazing thing would be.

“Ugooooohhh.....”

“..... This is.....”

Looking up at Senpu Village, Leid and I have once again been struck speechless.

From far away, it looked like a rocky mountain. But 'rocky mountain' it is not. Rather, 'mountain made of rock' is much more correct.

As for the design..... I think the painting The Tower of Babel by the artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder is close. Overall, it is like a short and wide trapezoid, separated into about 20 stories.

The issue is its size.

Having come this close, the top is no longer visible even when we look upwards.

The structure doesn't actually reach the clouds, but it is no exaggeration to say that its height is on par with a high rise building. At the very least, it is more than 100m tall.

"So freaking biiiiggg!"

"..... Awawa....."

"This is too amazing....."

Ted and the new soldiers are quivering, but I'm sure we are no better off.

We-, well it's like how Pharaoh Khufu's pyramid is about 140m tall, I guess?

(T/N: He's referring to the Great Pyramid of Giza, which is 146.5m in height, according to Wikipedia.)

As the representatives of technology in fantasy worlds, it shouldn't be surprising for dwarves to be capable of making something like this, but

"Man it's huge! Seriously, this is just..... huge!"

"..... Umuu....."

Anyhow, all men are weak against gigantic things.

Me, Leid, Ted, and the others are completely acting like kids from the countryside who has come to Tokyo on a school excursion.

"How long are you guys going to keep staring? The sun is going to set soon."

“My lord, it appears that the entrance is over that way.”

For Claura and Leiha, it’s just business as usual.



“So you must be Margils-sama. We’ve heard everything from the Daroun clan.”

Senpu Village’s front gates also turned out to be quite large, reaching almost 10m in height. It is currently thrown all the way open.

Wagons packed with logs and stone are passing to and fro through the gates, alongside large numbers of merchants and soldiers. The air is brimming with energy.

After finding the guard station located in front of the gates, we called out to it, at which a dwarven guard who managed to seem quite sociable despite wearing heavy armor came out to receive us.

“Glad that makes things quick. May we go in then?”

“Of course, of course. But please wait a second, we’ll hand out your recognition plaques now.”

Together with the guard, several officials had also come out of the guard station. All of them have a curious box the size of a mikan box fixed to their body with belts.

(T/N: Mikan means ‘mandarin orange.’ The term ‘mikan box’ is basically a cardboard box for storing mikan. Many places use the term as if it’s a standard box size, but officially, it’s actually a standard box type (nowadays more commonly called ‘A Type’), and there is a certain degree of allowable variance in size. I’ve seen anything from 380W x 320D x 280H to 440W x 320D x 320H, but well, it’s somewhere around there.)

Recognition plaque?

I have a feeling that the next bit of dwarven technology is coming right up.

“Um, so, you are Margils-san. You are Irudo-san. How about you? Alright, Leid-san, then Claura-san, then Leihanaluka-san.....”

The officials are going to each and every one of us, asking for our names and then fiddling with the tool fixed to their bodies. When I take a peek, I see that there is a part with keys exactly like a typewriter that they are punching with their fingers.

Gotsu gotsu, gotsu. Every time the officials hit a key, the sound of something hard being hit resounds from the inside of those tools.

“.....”

“What do you think they’re doing?”

As I am politely but quite excitedly waiting for what is going to happen next, Leid comes up next to me and asks me with unsuppressable curiosity in his voice.

He sure has gotten talkative after coming here.

“Please wait just a little bit longer..... Yep, done.”

“Margils-san, here you go.”

The official in front of Leid draws out a metal plate from his tool and hands it over. The others and I are also handed a plate each.

I take a close look at mine. It is a roughly A5-sized silver-colored metallic plate, with its surface tightly packed with bumps about 5mm in size.

Threaded on a rope, it is apparently supposed to be kept on our person at all times, hanging from our necks.

“Could it be that these bumps were made with that tool what you are carrying?”

“Yes, that is exactly right!”

The official nods happily.

According to his explanation, these bumps are kind of like a secret code that only dwarves from Senpu Village know. On these ‘recognition plaques’ passed out to every visitor is the person’s name and physical characteristics. In other words, they are effectively ID cards.

Furthermore, there is also a characteristic unique to each person that only

dwarves can spot recorded on these plaques, so any imposter trying to use someone else's plaque would be seen through immediately.

On top of that, these plaques are so incredible that they can even be used as a form of credit card, and there are also machines that read them to control access to various high-profile areas.

Most likely, these bumps are something similar to Braille or Morse code, where a key is needed to be able to read the information. That much I can deduce, but the exact details I have no idea about.

“Man..... dwarves are seriously amazing.....”

“They sure are.....”

Before we knew it, Leid and I had totally hit it off, exchanging our recognition plaques with each other and staring closely at the plaques and the officials' tools.

“..... Goodness, so this is what it means when they say that men will always be children.”

“Haah, I suppose.....”

“Leiha, just in case they all become lost children, make sure to keep a firm eye on them, alright?”

“That's..... yes.....”

It seems that our enthusiasm did not get through to any of the ladies.