

To Be a Power in the Shadows!

- Volume 5 -

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[Tenshi Translations]

Chapter 89

Being Gatekeeper A is Great!

The Festival of the God of War ended up going to Nee-san.

Student Council President Rose's sudden intrusion left me a bit nervous about how things would turn out, but I'm glad I managed to make something out of the situation with just a bit of ad-lib.

The atmosphere of the entire venue had been taken out of my hands, but then in a flash of brilliance I realized that that works in its own way. True enough, I managed to make good use of it and turned it into the pattern where I get to take everything home.

I totally clinched it.

The world is constantly in motion, and people's thoughts are also constantly in motion. My stage does not necessarily go according to my script. From now on, I shall continue to improve my ad-libbing skills and flexible thinking such that I would be able to react to any situation.

And so with that, the royal capital returned to its normal self after the Festival of the God of War ended.

It seems that some people are running helter-skelter because of everything that happened with Oriana Kingdom, but it's completely unrelated to a run-of-the-mill noble like myself. The academy also started the second semester without any further issues.

Apparently something-or-other faction is going at it with something-or-other faction inside Oriana Kingdom. It's the rumor everywhere that a civil war would probably break out before the end of the year. If a civil war really does happen, then I would very much like to intrude on it. I'm really looking forward to it, actually.

The academy without Student Council President Rose is continuing as normal.

I do feel bad for her, but that's about it. People are trashing Student Council President

Rose and saying that the incident was related to a love affair or a struggle for the inheritance of the throne or whatnot, but nobody seems to know for sure. But regardless of the reason, I personally support her way of life, so I hope that she's living well somewhere.

Nee-san seems to have been busy with various things after winning the tournament, but everything was finally settled before autumn break and she managed to come back to the academy.

She sure got famous in the blink of an eye.

But then after she became free, she would come bug me every single day, so I had no choice but to arrange a celebratory dinner for her.

And that's why right now, I am having a meal with Nee-san at a restaurant under Mitsugoshi Group.

I can swear that what I had reserved was the time-limited super cheap poor people course, so even I'm confused about this astonishingly luxurious fare and treatment.

"I didn't actually expect you to be so resourceful. Even the food at the palace wasn't this good....."

So says Nee-san while looking at the dazzling dishes.

Moreover, this is a private room that is clearly for VIPs.

I was worried whether they mistook me for someone else so I asked a staff member while on my way to the toilet, but apparently that was not the case.

Seeing as this restaurant is under Mitsugoshi Group, did I perhaps get a free upgrade for being friends with Gamma?

I'm a bit scared about being billed an ungodly amount after the meal.

"Actually, I'm friends with the president of Mitsugoshi Co."

"Liar."

"No, I'm serious. That's why they're giving us such good service, I think."

“You see, jokes need to be funny and easy to understand, or else people won’t get it. Don’t worry, I’m not doubting you. I properly understand that you’ve put in a lot of effort for my sake.”

Nee-san flashes me a sweet smile.

It’s been so long since I’ve seen Nee-san in such high spirits. So I decided to just let the matter rest.

“I actually really love the food at Mitsugoshi restaurants. Their menu is always filled with new and delicious dishes. Ah, it’s my first time having roast beef.”

“Heeh~”

In this way, the two of us enjoy the meal together.

“Annerose got eliminated, Iris-sama withdrew halfway, and that Jimina guy got disqualified. So I won pretty much by luck.”

“Guess so.”

“You were supposed to deny that.”

“That’s not the case at all. Nee-san won by your strength!”

“Indeed, of course it was by my strength. But there are some people out there who don’t think so.”

“That makes sense, considering the circumstances.”

“Do it again.”

“How foolish they are to not acknowledge Nee-san’s strength! Have they no eyes to see?!”

“There’s no helping it. That’s how the masses are. But I am not a woman who would take this lying down.”

“Isn’t it about time for Nee-san to learn how to be more ladylike?”

“I am just about to get angry.”

“Those ignorant fools! They must be made to understand Nee-san’s strength and beauty!”

“Naturally I intend to do so. So cooperate with me.”

“No, thanks.”

“Denied. This is also for your sake, after all.”

“My sake?”

“Yep. You, what do you plan to do after you graduate? You won’t be able to get into anywhere proper with half-hearted grades.”

“Even if you ask me that all of a sudden.....”

She has a point, I haven’t really thought much about what I’ll do after I graduate. Our house will most likely be succeeded by Nee-san, so I’d probably have to find a job some other place.

A dazzling place like a knight order does not fit me.

A more mob-like job..... oh, right.

“Being Gatekeeper A sounds good.”

That role that gets to stop the protagonist and say ‘you can’t pass if you don’t pay the entrance tax.’

“‘Gatekeeper A’? What’s the ‘A’ for?”

“It means ‘normal,’ I guess?”

“You..... gatekeeper is not an occupation for a noble. In the first place, it’s an exhausting job with low pay where they have to take two shifts back to back without much rest.”

“Oh, really?”

No rest sounds quite tough. It might negatively affect my activities as a power in the shadows.

“How about being a jailkeeper?”

“It’s even worse. That job is only for human trash to do.”

“‘Trash’..... Well anyways, decisions for the future can be made in the future. As long as I can do the thing that I want to do, I don’t mind what job I get.”

“What is the thing that you want to do?”

“It’s a secret. It’s the thing that’s most important to me, so of course I’m not going to tell it to anyone.”

“Sure, sure, so you don’t actually have anything. Stop spouting random things to postpone problems to the future.”

“Why did you come to that conclusion?”

“How about you think back on your own actions so far?”

“Well, whatever.”

“No, it’s not ‘whatever.’ This is your future that we’re talking about. Leave your autumn break free. If you do as I say, then I’ll be able to somehow get you into a knight order.”

“What is it that you plan on doing?”

“*Fufu*. The subjugation for the progenitor vampire ‘Queen of Blood’ is about to begin. All you’ll have to do is stay behind me.”

Nee-san flashes me a fearless grin.

Chapter 90

It's Already Completely Healed

After dinner, the two of us are walking together through the streets of the royal capital.

When it came time to ring up the bill and I was about to pay, they told me that it was all covered. It's probably Gamma's arrangement, but it might also have been because Nee-san is the latest champion of the Festival of the God of War. I can't quite determine which it is.

"It's already past the dorms' curfew, isn't it?"

"I told them that I'll be attending a party and already got permission."

"As expected."

The streets at night are unexpectedly quiet. I suddenly look up at the sky and see a shining crescent moon. For some reason, I feel like the moon is a bit more red than usual.

"What's the matter?"

So asks Nee-san upon seeing me look up at the moon.

"I feel like the moon is a bit more red than usual."

"Is it? It seems the same to me though."

"Perhaps. But thinking about it again, I suppose it doesn't really matter whether the moon is red or blue or any other color."

Though I do think that it's cooler when it's red.

"So, we were in the middle of our talk about the Queen of Blood."

"Yep."

“I’m sure you already know about the Queen of Blood’s underlings recently causing incidents outside of Outlaw City.”

Naturally, I did not know that.

“The surrounding countries who are taking that seriously have sent a joint request to the Magic Swordsmen Guild to subjugate the Queen of Blood.”

“Ok, with you so far.”

“So a team of top magic swordsmen is being gathered for this subjugation. I say team, but it’s full of people with oversized egos, so it’s not like we’re going to get along like best friends and hold each other’s hands.”

“So then?”

“And so that’s how I can bring you along as my plus one. Don’t worry, you can just stand back and watch from a safe spot. I’ll do everything. Afterwards, the fact that you went along means you’ll get some of the credit too.”

“I see.”

“If you get some credit here, then it’ll be easy to wrangle you into a knight order. I managed to get pretty close with the daughter of the Grand Commander of the Imperial Knight Order at the previous party, so I can help put in a word for you if you want.”

“Hmm.”

“The subjugation will happen during autumn break. I’m sure there are some hasty ones who’ve gone ahead already, but I don’t think there’s any cause for worry.....”

That moment, the wind carries the smell of blood to us.

Nee-san also notices it a brief instant later.

“The smell of blood. It’s close.....”

Nee-san stops walking and glares into a dark alleyway.

“Follow along behind me.”

“Alright.”

With a hand on the hilt of her sword, Nee-san enters the alleyway.

Leaving a bit of a distance between us, I follow along.

As we proceed down the dark alleyway, we finally spy a dark figure that’s crouched over.

Gucha, gucha. It sounds like the figure is chewing something.

“.....!”

Biting back a shriek of surprise, Nee-san draws her sword.

Probably noticing us by our presence, the black figure turns around.

It turns out to be a blood-covered human.

No, that’s incorrect.

That... Thing’s eyes are red like blood, and razor-sharp teeth can be seen within its slackly opened mouth.

Red saliva drips onto the stone pavement.

At the feet of the Thing lies the remains of a human corpse that’s been chewed all the way through.

“Drop your weapon and surre—.....!”

“AAaaaaA!”

The Thing bares its teeth and leaps towards Nee-san.

Those are not movements of a human, but of a beast.

Nee-san’s sword glitters like moonlight—then the Thing is bisected from the torso.

“I did... warn you.....”

So says Nee-san towards the lumps of meat that she had severed.

However.

“It’s still alive.....?!”

The Thing is crawling with its upper body alone. It reaches out with one hand to grab Nee-san’s foot.

“aaaaAA.....”

“So insistent!”

Nee-san’s sword chops off the Thing’s head.

The head rolls on the stone pavement while still chomping on empty air, making that distinctive *gachi gachi* sound of teeth gnashing together.

The red eyes glaring at Nee-san gradually lose their strength, until finally it goes silent.

An almost overwhelming stench of blood pervades the alleyway.

“This was a ghoul..... could it be one of the Queen of Blood’s.....?”

She looks down on the corpse that’s been cleanly severed into three parts. Its form is human-like but its skin is pale white like there was no blood flowing underneath, its eyes are red, and its teeth are sharp.

It also moved like a beast and had astonishing vitality.

However, what was clearly missing was intelligence.

“Ghouls are underlings of vampires, right?”

Nee-san is still looking down, and does not answer me.

“Nee-san.....?”

“Ghouls were all previously human.....”

“Likely so.”

“Recently, I’ve been afraid. Afraid of whether I would also become like this one day. Like a mindless monster.....”

Her voice is unusually weak.

“I heard that Princess Rose had demon possession..... though it might be just a rumor. But..... I haven’t told this to anyone, but I..... I might also have demon possession.....”

Nee-san’s face as she turns around is slightly colored with sorrow.

“A few years ago, a black bruise suddenly appeared on my back. I was scared and didn’t tell anyone, but it just kept getting larger and larger. But one day, it suddenly started healing rapidly, and it was already gone like a lie before I realized it. I was relieved, like ‘oh whew, it got healed.’ But I looked into it recently, and apparently there’s no way to heal demon possession. If that black bruise really was demon possession, then someday I.....”

“I think you probably don’t really need to worry about that.....”

Cus it’s already completely healed.

“You silly. I’m just joking. There’s no way I have demon possession.”

Nee-san laughs and looks up at the night sky.

“But..... you can’t follow along behind me forever. And that’s why you need to keep your autumn break free.”

“Got it.”

“We’re done with this talk. Let’s go call the knights.”

Nee-san walks off as if in escape.

I look up at the sky again. That moon really does look slightly red.

Chapter 91

What Belongs to Bandits Also Belongs to Me

I am listening to Beta in my own dorm room.

It is night time after classes at the academy are over. Beta is making her periodic report.

“After the incident at the Festival of the God of War, Doem’s standing is.....”

“*Fumu.*”

I’ve given the matter a lot of thought in retrospect of what Nee-san said, and my conclusion is that Outlaw City really does seem a great place to go.

In the first place, I haven’t done any bandit-hunting recently. And Outlaw City is pretty much just a gathering of people marginally better than bandits, right? And what belongs to bandits belongs to me.

“It has become much easier for Epsilon to move. Within Oriana Kingdom.....”

“*Fumu.*”

That talk from Nee-san about my job in the future.

Another way of interpreting that is that all would be fine as long as I have money, right?

If I have money, then I can do whatever I want.

Outlaw City is packed with people not much better than bandits.

And I’m sure the big bosses there have been raking it in by doing tons of bad things.

So everyone’s problems would be resolved if I beat them up and help myself to their treasure.

“The fighting strength of Shadow Garden is growing at a steady rate. At Alexandria, we are recently devoting our resources towards the development of the steam engine.....”

“Fumu.”

If I have enough money to live the rest of my life in luxury, then it won't matter what job I take.

Or rather, in that situation, depending on my mood, I could be a gatekeeper, an escort, a jobless guy, a baker, or anything else. I would be able to experience whatever mob job I feel like.

By earning money, humans can grasp a life not bound down by money.

I think I just said something cool.

And so, of the three factions in Outlaw City, unfortunately it has just been set in stone that one of them will be wiped out very soon.

Which one should I pick?

Picking all of them would be fine too, but if I do it all at once then there'd be nothing left to enjoy later.

'Queen of Blood' gets me the most excited, and I can think up any number of destruction plots involving progenitor vampires and whatnot. But dessert should go last in a meal, you know what I mean?

I'm torn.

But I suppose the faction with the highest priority to be destroyed really is the Queen of Blood.

“And that's all for my report.”

“Fumu.”

“If there was anything that you wish for me to improve on——”

“It smells.....”

When I respond to Beta, who's on bended knee with head hanging, she quivers with a start.

"Is it Outlaw City..... this smell of blood....."

"Oh whew, it wasn't me....."

So Beta mutters softly.

"It seems the Queen of Blood is starting to move....."

"That is so. The possibility of the Queen of Blood being connected to the Order is low, so we have not pursued——"

"A storm is coming..... a storm of blood....."

"Storm of blood.....?"

"Look at the moon, Beta."

"The moon, my lord.....?"

I gesture towards the moon floating outside my window that I think seems red.

"Ah, it's more red than usual.....?"

"So you notice it too, the red moon....."

"——?! Are you saying that it's the legendary Red Moon.....?!"

".....If it is?"

While keeping Beta in the corner of my eye, I raise my glass filled with blood-red wine and take a sip.

'Legendary Red Moon,' huh.

I guess anything would sound cool just by pinning the word 'legendary' in front.

"B-, but that's..... If that's the case, then Outlaw City would..... no, all the surrounding

countries would also.....!"

"Fear not."

"B-, but! We must immediately dispatch Shadow Garden——!"

"Fear not, I said."

"!! I beg your pardon....."

I look down upon the shivering Beta and elegantly fold my legs.

"Leave this matter to me."

"Could it be..... Does Shadow-sama intend to handle this matter alone?!"

"You disapprove.....?"

"N-, no, I dare not..... I understand that that is the most reliable method to deal with it. Ho-, however, if anything ever befalls Shadow-sama, then we..... then I.....!"

"Fear not."

"Shadow-sama.....?"

I raise a corner of my lips in a grin.

"All it is..... is just a red moon. Right?"

"——?!"

Beta looks at me with wide open eyes.

At first, it is shock on her face, but then it gradually turns into a gentle smile.

"I have once again failed to recognize my lord's greatness."

Then she bows her head deeply.

"'Just a red moon'..... Even a legend is but a figure of speech before Shadow-sama."

I mean, I only pointed out that the moon looks a bit red, and she turned it into 'Legendary Red Moon' with all the capital letters. I really have to hand it to her.

"Don't you think the red moon is beautiful in its own way.....?"

"*Fufu*..... so it is. I pray for your good fortune in battle."

"Do you desire to partake.....?"

"Yes, gladly! Thank you, my lord."

Beta and I enjoy the wine together while gazing at the moon.

Well then, let's go with a bang at Outlaw City during autumn break.

Chapter 92

Two Loser (Dogs) and a Watchdog

Outlaw City is, in short, a gigantic slum.

Vagrants gather here and there, shanties line the streets, rubbish heaps fill the air with the smell of rot.

However, that is not all there is to Outlaw City.

The reason is because there are three skyscrapers soaring over the rest of the city.

“So that is the castle of the Queen of Blood, the Red Tower.....”

So murmurs a man with a face like an evil pro wrestler while looking up at the blood-red tower within the light of a setting sun.

“What’s the matter, Quinton? You getting jelly legs?”

The person who is calling out to Quinton is a handsome young man with blond hair.

“Like hell I am, Goldoh. It’s just that I’ve never seen a building this tall before.”

“Hmph..... I’ve also fought in many places all over the world, but this is indeed a splendid tower. It would probably take a whole day to climb to the top.”

The two look up at the Red Tower and sigh.

The red-colored tower that looks like a spiral of blood piercing the sky. The two cannot even imagine how such a tower was built.

“Just because the tower is imposing, it doesn’t mean the person inside is strong. Let’s go.”

“This place is merely a gathering place for would-be’s. The head of the Queen of Blood shall be ours.”

Quinton and Goldoh might seem like opposites from their appearance, but they found a surprisingly rapport with each other the first time they talked. It might perhaps be because they share the common point of having lost to the same opponent, but even after the Festival of the God of War, the two have gotten closer and come to act together.

The two walk through the streets of Outlaw City as the sun sets. As they proceed deeper towards the center, the desolated slum gradually turns into a jumbled city where cultures clash and fuse in colorful and eye-grabbing ways.

“Well this is surprising.....”

“I agree..... keep your eyes peeled.”

The center of Outlaw City that no one can imagine by looking in from the outside.

What’s changed is not only the buildings. The people walking on the streets are also no longer vagrants, but beasts with glittering eyes that seem to be searching for prey.

There is not a single small fry here.

Both Quinton and Goldoh understand that fully.

As they proceed while staying ready to draw their swords at any moment, the jumbled town seems suddenly unified under a gloomy air.

That is the proof of having entered the territory of the Queen of Blood.

Both of them sensed the change in vibe.

“We’re close.”

Mysteriously, there isn’t a single resident to be seen. However, they feel presences squirming inside the houses. The Red Tower also looks a lot closer now.

The two redouble their vigilance.

Then they finally arrive before the Red Tower.

“This is the entrance to the tower.....!”

Quinton approaches the gigantic door. The door is decorated with intricate carvings of sinister figures that seem to be human yet not human.

“Let’s go.”

Quinton lays a hand on the door. But at that moment.

“Hihi, hold on a second.....”

They are suddenly addressed by someone. The voice is terribly cracked to the point where it’s quite hard to hear.

Upon putting his hand back down and taking a look around, he notices a dirty rag that has fallen beside the door. Taking a second look, he sees it moving a slight bit..... it turns out to be a human and not a rag.

“Neither of you have the qualifications to open this door.....”

So saying, the person wrapped in rags stands up.

And in doing so, reveals the figure of a terribly emaciated man. His height is above that of Quinton’s, but his cheeks are hollowed and his eyes are caved in. He looks exactly like mere skin and bones. Dull, dirty white hair reaches to his shoulders.

A living corpse. There is no other description more apt for him.

“No qualification, you said?”

“The only people allowed to open this door are the Queen’s underlings, her guests, or the truly strong.....”

“Hmph. It’s true that we are neither underlings nor guests. However, we are strong enough to carve off the Queen of Blood’s head.”

Quinton looks up at the white-haired man and grins dauntlessly.

“Hihi, hihhi, hi, hi, hihhi.....”

“What’s so funny?!”

“Hihi, hi, I know that I myself am a fool, but..... it always is amusing to see those who are even more foolish than me.....”

“What did you say?!”

“Hihi, know your place..... once you become like me, it’s too late.....”

The white-haired man draws back a part of his rags.

What is realized is his entire left side.

However, there is nothing beyond his left shoulder.

“This is what became of a fool who challenged the Queen of Blood four years ago..... The fool lost his dominant arm, and even now is kept like a lowly, wretched watchdog.....”

There is a sturdy-looking ring around his neck that is connected by chains.

“Hah. I am Quinton, a man famed for my relentlessness in the Festival of the God of War. And this here is Sure-Win Golden Dragon Goldoh. We’re on a completely different dimension from a small fry like you!”

“Hihi, never heard of either of you..... it’s my personal policy to not remember the names of those weaker than me.....”

“Ahh? Then who the hell are you?”

“Hihi, I am but a mere watchdog..... but long ago..... there were those who called me ‘The White Demon’.....”

“‘The White Demon’? Never heard of it. How about you, Goldoh?”

Quinton asks Goldoh.

“I kind of feel like I might have heard it somewhere, but..... sorry, nothing comes to mind.”

Goldoh shakes his head.

However, his eyes are still fixed on the Watchdog in vigilance.

“So there you have it, Nameless Small Fry-san.”

“Hihi, that’s fine. The name of a fool is best left buried and forgotten.....”

“I’m sorry, but you’re gonna have to let us pass.”

“I am a Watchdog..... I can’t let any small fries pass.....”

“.....Don’t blame us no matter what happens.”

Quinton glares at the Watchdog who refuses to get out of his way and draws his greatsword.

The Watchdog also draws a thin, single-bladed sword. It is a beautiful piece of work longer than the height of an average man.

“Stay sharp..... Quinton.”

Goldoh also draws his sword.

“What do you mean by that?”

“This man..... I cannot see the depth of his strength.”

“Haah? This one-handed sack of bones? You’re pulling my leg, right?”

Quinton ignores the word of caution and dashes in with a swing.

The trajectory of his greatsword glitters within the twilight——then blood spurts out in the next instant.

“.....a?”

The severed part of his greatsword falls to the ground with a dry sound.

“Qu-, Quinton!!”

Goldoh’s shout and Quinton falling over with his stomach sliced open happen at the

same time.

“So next..... would be you.....?”

Before Goldoh stands the Watchdog, stained in Quinton’s blood.

“Y-, YOU BASTARD!”

Goldoh almost could not catch the sword that cut Quintin.

The only things that he can see for sure is the fountaining blood and the broken greatsword.

What absurd skill with the sword.

Despite having his dominant arm stolen away and having been starved until he is but mere skin and bones, this Watchdog is still in a place much higher than where he and Quinton are. This, Goldoh now understands.

However, Goldoh still stands ready, with his sword up.

His time with Quinton was short. However, they are comrades who share the same will after helping each other recover from defeat.

“Don’t worry..... he’s not dead. He can’t be used anymore if he’s dead.....”

The Watchdog laughs derisively.

“How dare you do such a thing to Quinton!!”

Goldoh imbues his sword with magic and releases his most powerful technique.

“EVIL GOD • INSTANT KILL • GOLDEN DRAGON SWORD!!”

The moment he unleashes his technique, Goldoh’s eyes meet those of the Watchdog’s.

The Watchdog’s terrifyingly blood-shot dark pupils.

When he see those unfathomable eyes, his memory regarding the White Demon comes back to him.

“D-, don’t tell you, you are.....”

The Watchdog’s lips curl upwards.

If this one-handed Watchdog is the White Demon, then——

Understanding the despairingly vast difference in strength between the two of them, Goldoh promptly chooses to just let his sword strike hit the ground.

“*Nnn.....?*”

Sand and dust rise up in a huge cloud.

“Quinton!! I promise——I promise I’ll definitely come back for you!!”

So Goldoh shouts even while dashing away.

“He ran away..... I can’t give chase..... I’m a Watchdog after all.....”

Clearing the dust cloud with a single swing of his sword, the Watchdog watches Goldoh’s back receding into the distance.

“Hihi, but..... can he actually manage to get away.....?”

What is being reflected in the Watchdog’s eyes is the doors of the numerous houses opening up and ‘them’ rushing to capture Goldoh.

“Hi, hihi, hihi, hihihi.....!”

The Watchdog looks up at the tower soaring into the sky.

The place where three towers stand and three rulers reign is the rubbish dump of the world——Outlaw City.

A world of strong eats weak that swallows in evil and wealth and power from all over the world.

Kings, knights, and even demonic monsters have no power here.

This is Outlaw City.

Here, strength is law.

Chapter 93

Shockingly Huge Bargain Sale, Only in Outlaw City!!

Autumn break.

Nee-san and I have come to Outlaw City.

“This is Outlaw City? It sure smells.”

“There’s no helping it. It’s a slum, after all.”

So answers Nee-san while intimidating vagrants with her glare.

In the distance stands three towers. The fact that they look like bowling pins just makes me want to knock them all down.

“So we just have to go to that tower?”

“You silly. What do you intend to do by immediately crashing into the enemy’s main base? The Magic Swordsmen Guild has set up a base of operations, so we’re going there first to gather information.”

“Heeh~”

I stay close behind Nee-san as we make our way through the slum. After a while, we come out to an area with lines of stalls.

It is extremely lively here, what with the buying and selling of strange foods and suspicious medicines and stolen goods and pets.

“That beautiful young lady over there! Come take a look! I just restocked with some lively pets!”

“Me?”

“Yes, yes, the world’s prettiest young lady over there!”

“Hmph, he sure has a good eye. Won’t hurt to take a short look, I suppose.”

“Nee-san, that was just lip service.”

“Shut up.”

I am dragged towards the stall.

“Come, come, here is the lively pet that just arrived!”

What the shop owner drags before us is a blond-haired young man with a slave collar on his neck.

“Magic swordsman slave, Goldoh-kun! What do you think? It’s quite handsome, won’t it make a rather fine pairing with the beautiful young lady?”

Goldoh-kun’s face is black and blue and all swollen, as if he was subjected to a mass lynching. He seems to be trying to say something with his “U—, U—” cries.

“It seems quite beat up, though?”

“Ha ha ha! I guess there was a little bit of mishandling during the transporting. Alright, I’ll knock down the original 30 million Zeny to 27 million Zeny, just for you!”

“That’s expensive.”

“No, no, young lady. This level of a magic swordsman, it would go for more than double if you buy it outside! This is a huge sale bargain, one that you can only find in Outlaw City!!”

“Nah, I don’t want it.”

“You sure are a good haggler, young lady! Alright, you win. Today, I’ll specially add another one for you!”

“Why are both of you using the ‘it’ pronoun?”

“Come, come! This is also a lively magic swordsman, its name is Quinton-kun!!”

What the store owner brings out this time is a man with a face that looks like an evil pro wrestler who has a big wound on his stomach. It seems that at least the minimum amount of treatment has been applied to the wound.

Quinton-kun is going “*Mu—, Mu—!*” as if trying to say something.

I kind of feel like I might have met this one somewhere before also.....

“Goldoh-kun and Quinton-kun, two of them together for the price of only 40 million Zeny!! You won’t find a deal this great outside of Outlaw City!!”

“Its stomach looks wounded, though?”

“Oh man, this one also got mishandled during the transportation?! Alright, 37 million Zeny for the both of them in a set! I really can’t do down any further than this!”

“On second thought, I don’t want either of them.”

“Ehh?! Come on, you can’t say that, young lady!”

“I already have all I need.”

So saying, Nee-san roughly brushes my hair.

“I see, so the young man is this young lady’s sla—”

“No I’m not.”

“Let’s go.”

Nee-san drags me away by the scruff of my neck.

At that time, we hear someone else addressing the store owner.

“Store owner. If you’re really selling the two as a set for 37 million, then I’ll buy.”

“Of course I am! Thank you for your patronage! *Nn?* C-, could you be?!”

“*U—, U—*”

“Mu—, Mu—!”

It seems that the two of them got sold.

Both of them had faces that seemed slightly familiar to me so I was a bit worried, but now I’m relieved with knowing that they properly found someone who would buy them.

Wait.

If they were bought, then wouldn’t it mean that right now, inside that store, there is now at least 37 million Zeny in cash? In other words, if I attack that store.....

No, I cannot lower myself to become satisfied with such a small sum.

I need to dream bigger.

“Start walking by yourself already.”

“I would be able to if you would stop dragging me like that.”

“If I don’t do this, then you’ll get lost.”

“Wh-, I won’t!”

I look up at the three soaring towers in the distance while walking.

One red, one white, and one black.

Well then, which should I pick?

Chapter 94

Stop Throbbing.....

As soon as we reached the Magic Swordsmen Guild's base of operations, Nee-san got called away to some meeting.

Apparently it's a gathering where top magic swordsmen discuss and plan out the subjugation.

I was not invited.

Nee-san tried to protest, but even she couldn't do anything about it.

Nee-san told me "quietly wait for me" and left for the meeting.

So I decided to go take a walk. Quietly.

When I make my way out, the sun has already set. The sky is still slightly lit up by the afterglow, but in the east, the reddened moon has already come up.

It is just my imagination, or is the moon getting more and more red by the day?

None of the residents of Outlaw City pay the moon any mind as they walk on.

All of them are frantic about today's survival, dealing with the customers before them, the prey before them.

In such a way, I met my commemorative 10th pickpocket of the day.

I purposely keep my wallet in my trousers pocket so it's easy to pickpocket, but whenever it gets pickpocketed I make sure to pickpocket the pickpocket who pickpocketed me.

In other words, my wallet gets recovered, while I recover the other side's wallet.

This world is, after all, survival of the fittest.

Within this short period of time, the contents of my wallet has already grown from 40k Zeny to 110k Zeny. The world sure works in mysterious ways.

Perhaps my vocation is to be Resident A in Outlaw City.

This Outlaw City is the best, I get to earn money just by going out for a walk.

As I walk on while feeling like humming, a scream suddenly rings out.

“It’s a ghoul!! A ghoul has appeared!!”

Apparently it’s close.

The reactions of the residents of Outlaw City are fast. Those who can’t fight immediately run away.

However, there are many stores who continue business as usual, not paying the scream any mind.

Furthermore, there are those who head towards the scream with smirks on their faces.

“Did you hear? A ghoul just showed up. Haven’t there been a lot of them lately?”

“Let’s go let off some steam then.”

Some are cracking their knuckles, while others are drawing knives.

I stealthily follow the crowd towards where the ghoul supposedly is.

By the time I arrive, the ghoul has already been captured.

Its legs must have been broken already, as it’s only crawling on the ground.

“You fucker! How dare you bite my arm!!”

Kick.

“You son of a bitch! I lost fucking huge at gambling!! It’s all your fucking fault!!”

Stomp.

“Mary-chan turned down my proposal even though I financed her more than a million Zeny!! It’s all your fucking fault!!”

Crush.

A sea of blood spreads over the ground.

I see, a ghoul’s high vitality makes it the perfect punching bag.

The ghoul just goes “aaaaAA.....” while letting people do whatever they want to it.

Looking at this scene, I catch myself thinking that Outlaw City really is great. Surely an incident of this level is just an everyday occurrence that no one would blink an eye at.

A city smeared with blood and slaughter——how cool is that.

“Fufufu.....”

I chuckle while leaning against a wall with my arms crossed. I’m in the mood to play at being a mysterious young man.

Eventually, the ghoul that is being absolutely wailed on loses strength and falls over, which causes the gathered crowd to lose their interest.

It seems to be over.

The sky has already gotten quite dark.

I am about to head back when suddenly, I feel a breath of life reviving the ghoul.

“Hii!! St-, stop!”

The man’s scream and blood spurting happens almost at the same time.

The suddenly revived ghoul has bitten onto a man’s neck and is tearing his throat apart.

“Wh-, what’s with this one?! It’s different from usual?!”

There goes one more person.

However, despite being unsettled, the other men all draw their weapons.

The revived ghoul..... is red.

Its skin and its eyes are both red like blood. Brandishing its razor-sharp teeth and claws, it..... roars.

“GUAAAAHHHHHH!!”

The ghoul abruptly jumps like a beast.

One mow of its sharp claws sends one man’s head flying.

“R-, run away!!”

It seems that even the residents of Outlaw City would run away from this.

The ghoul starts feeding on a corpse. I chuckle like *“fufufu.....”* while still leaning against the wall.

Well then, what should I do now?

Should I run away like a mob..... or should I continue with pretending to be a mysterious young man?

These residents of Outlaw City, I’m pretty sure I won’t ever meet them again. So let’s go with the non-mob option then.

“Fufufu.....”

U—n.

But then, at that instant.

I look up from feeling a presence, and witness a magic swordsman with a small build jumping down onto the ghoul from above.

The swordsman’s sword flashes at the moment of landing, which causes the red ghoul’s to be bisected from the head down.

What a well-performed strike.

The swordsman who took down the red ghoul in a single strike wipes the blood off their sword and turns around.

Then our eyes meet.

The swordsman with a small built who has on a jet-black garment and a witch-like pointy hat——turns out to be a beautiful woman with red hair.

The two of us wordlessly look at each other for a while.

“You would do well to escape.....”

So she says in a surprisingly cute voice.

“The Rampage is about to begin.....”

Then she looks up at the red moon with a brooding expression.

“The moon is red..... there is no more time.....”

“Your name.....?”

Seeing the lady about to leave after saying what she wanted to say, I call her back.

“I am the Eldest Vampire Hunter, Milia..... The one who shall put an end to Elizabeth, the Queen of Blood.....”

With that, she melts into the darkness of night.

What is this that I’m feeling?

This is——

This feeling is——throbbing.

“*Fufufu*.....”

I look up at the red moon and grin. It seems that I might be a bit late returning to the

base. I hope Nee-san doesn't get mad at me.



Even in Outlaw City, the most bustling place is of course the red-light district.

Girls dressed up in clothing with lots of exposure can be seen tempting the men passing by.

In such a red-light district, a scream suddenly rings out.

“It’s a ghoul! A ghoul has appeared!!”

However, everyone is used to a problem of this level.

The bodyguards of the nearby brothels quickly show up to make short work of the ghoul.

What happens everyday, is supposed to happen today also.

“K-, KYAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!”

A prostitute’s scream and a bodyguard being torn to pieces happens almost at the same time.

What has showed up in this red-light district is, different from the usual, a red-colored ghoul.

The red ghoul easily reduces the bodyguards to pieces of meat, then leaps at a prostitute whose legs have given out.

“MARY!!”

A friend of hers calls out her name, but it’s already too late.

But the next instant, the red ghoul is bisected.

“Eh.....”

From behind the two congruent halves of the red ghoul appears a swordsman wearing

a jet-black longcoat.

He flicks his jet-black blade to rid it of blood, then looks down at Mary.

Deep within his dark hood shines two red eyes.

“Hii.....”

Those sinister eyes causes Mary to shiver and back away.

“If you don’t want to die, then run away.....”

So says the man in a voice like a reverberation from the depths of the earth.

‘I would run immediately if I could’ is what Mary is thinking.

“The Rampage is about to begin.....”

So the man murmurs while looking up at the red moon. His entire being seems to be exuding a sense of sorrow.

“The moon is red..... there is but a tiny sliver of time left.....”

Recently, the moon has for some reason been turning red.

Mary did think it strange, but not a single one of her prostitute colleagues paid it any mind.

Even if the moon becomes red, nothing would change in the world. That’s what everyone thought.

“W-, wait..... you are.....?”

Mary calls back the man in jet-black.

He seems like a scary person, but it is true that he just saved her. At the very least, she wants to thank him.....

“My name is Shadow..... He who lurks in shadows, he who hunts shadows.....”

With that, Shadow melts into the darkness of night.

“a..... thanks.....”

“Mary!! Are you alright?!”

Her senior snatches her up in a hug.

“Y-, yes, I’m fine.....”

“I’m so relieved..... this kind of thing’s been happening all the time lately. I don’t know care who the Queen of Blood is.....”

“D-, don’t, you can say that out loud.....”

“Hmph, like I care. Rather than that, didn’t that person just now call himself Shadow?”

“You know of him?!”

“W-, well, yes. Just the rumors, though. He’s the head of some organization that’s attacked some academy and obliterated some holy site and basically done whatever they wanted.”

“So he’s a bad guy.....”

Though he really was scary, but he didn’t feel like a bad guy. What she did feel from him was that he possessed a powerful will.

“Of course he is, perhaps even on the level of one of the Monarchs in our city. But why is such a large villain in Outlaw City.....”

“He mentioned that some rampage is about to begin. And also that the moon is red, and that there is no time.....”

“What is up with that? Recently the Queen of Blood has been raising a fuss about something too. Could it be that she joined hands with Shadow and is about to start another fight? I wish they’d give it a break, it’s always the small people like us that become victims.”

“I can’t tell for sure, but..... I don’t think that’s it.”

What is about to happen?

Mary looks up at the red moon with unease.

But mysteriously, she has a feeling that Shadow is about to do something about it. Surely, that is why he has come.

“Thank you.....”

Turning towards the direction that Shadow has disappeared in, Mary softly murmurs a word of gratitude.

Chapter 95

From Mob Escape to Mob Revenge

Sid has disappeared.

Claire dashes through Outlaw City in the night in search of her younger brother.

“Sid you baka!! I said to quietly wait for me, didn’t I?!”

The moment Claire heard that Sid had left the base on his own, the inside of her head went completely white.

After punching the magic swordsman who laughed while saying that Sid’s probably been caught and sold by a slave merchant by now, Claire flies out of the base.

Outlaw City in the nighttime is dangerous. Outlaw City is not just any normal slum. A student of Magic Swordsman Academy is just prey in the eyes of the residents here.

“Have you seen a black-haired boy around 15 years old pass by?!”

Claire desperately continues searching while asking the people passing by. All the residents who assail her are mercilessly driven back.

Relying on eyewitness reports, Claire finally finds black hair.

However.

He is currently being fed on by a ghoul within an alleyway.

“St-, STOP!!”

Claire draws her sword in a flash and dices the ghoul up.

Then she falls to her knees before the mangled black-haired male corpse.

“No..... this can’t be happening.....”

The blood-soaked black hair. Sid's hair is also around this length.

The body is mangled, so it's unidentifiable.

However, this was the only reliable piece of eyewitness information.

"I'm so sorry, Sid..... I shouldn't have brought you to Outlaw City....."

It's still not certain that this corpse is Sid.

However, Claire still hugs the blood-soaked black hair while crying.

Her heart is almost about to break from the overwhelming regret and guilt weighing on her.

Behind her, a certain presence draws near.

".....What do you want?"

So asks Claire while still hugging the black hair.

"Are you the one searching for a black-haired boy?"

".....Eh?"

Turning around with the intention of clutching at straws, she sees a beautiful swordswoman with red hair.

"You are....."

"I am Milia. A Vampire Hunter. I've seen two other black-haired boys."

"?! Tell me, please!"

"One, I saw a short while ago. He was chuckling like *'fufufu'* before a rampaging ghoul."

Claire tries to picture that, then immediately dismisses it.

"That's not him. My younger brother doesn't laugh creepily like that."

“I see. The other one was a magic swordsman. He was attacked and brought away by underlings of the Queen of Blood.....”

“!! What was his face like?!”

“Kind of plain and not very conspicuous.....”

There’s no doubt, that must have been Sid.

“Ahh, how can this be..... Oh, Sid.....”

“I’m sorry, I tried to save him, but couldn’t make it in time.....”

“.....W-, wait, if he was brought away, it means that he isn’t dead yet, right?!”

“Most likely..... he.....”

Milia looks conflicted about whether to speak further.

“You know something, don’t you?!”

“He..... will be sacrificed. The Red Moon will begin very soon. If he is not saved before then.....”

“Tell me! Where is Sid?! How can I save him?!”

Milia’s eyes swim for a while as she thinks quickly, until she sees the diced up ghoul.

“Were you the one who did this?”

“Eh? Yes, I did that.”

“If you agree to cooperate with me..... then perhaps..... My aim is Elizabeth, the Queen of Blood. Your aim is to rescue your younger brother. What do you say we join hands?”

So saying, Milia holds a hand out to Claire.

“If you cooperate with me, then I’ll tell you everything.”

Claire grabs that hand without hesitation.

“I’ll cooperate. If Sid can be saved, then I’m willing to do whatever it takes.”

“Follow me.”

Milia proceeds deeper into the alleyway.

Claire stands up, and indifferently chucks the blood-soaked black hair away. Now that she’s taken a second look, it doesn’t look anything at all like Sid’s hair.

“Wait for me, Sid. Onee-chan will definitely come to save you.....”

Then Claire also disappears into the darkness of the depths of the alleyway.



When I return to the base, Nee-san is not there.

It seems that she had gone out for a walk and we had just missed each other.

I sit down at the windowsill of the room that I had been allotted, and look down upon a street of Outlaw City. The unique smell of a slum stimulates my nose.

The instant I smelled this smell when I entered the city, I knew for sure that ‘this is the kind that’s going to make my nose hair long.’

This is something that only people who’ve experienced it first hand know, but people who live in environments with dirty air have longer nose hair.

And longer nose hair naturally means.....

Dig, dig.

“Ah, got a big one.”

Nose boogers also get big.

I look down on the street and confirm my target.

It needs not be said, I was not digging my nose for no reason. It is with a certain noble intention in mind that I did so.

The target is a hoodlum walking by on the street. He was the one who almost managed to shake me down just now. I got away with Mob Escape, but a mob's tenacity is not to be underestimated.

Let's do this, Mob Revenge.

I ready my hand in a finger flick style, and carefully aim at the target.

"Fufufu..... eat my Booger Bomber!"

Then I launch the ball of booger. My aim proves true, and the booger becomes plastered onto the hoodlum's face.

Mob Revenge, accomplished.

A bright red moon hangs in the night sky. I really want to go out to play soon, but I can't do so until Nee-san comes back and goes to sleep.

"Nee-san sure is late....."

Chapter 96

For the Sake of This Day, I Have Prepared This... Hole!!

The place where Milia led Claire turns out to be a crumbling house. The interior is, for some reason, buried under a thick layer of dust.

In that place where the air is filled with the smell of dust and mold, Milia lights a lamp.

“If you want to sit, there’s a chair over there.....”

So offers Milia while standing.

“I’m good.”

That chair looks like it’d collapse at any moment.

“Suit yourself. So, you said your name is Claire, right? Your younger brother is most likely within the Red Tower of Elizabeth the Queen of Blood.”

“What did you mean when you said ‘sacrifice’?”

“In order to explain that, I have to first tell you the story of Elizabeth the Queen of Blood. Elizabeth was a progenitor vampire queen. More than a thousand years ago, there were other progenitors aside from her and vampires reigned over the night of the entire world.”

Milia speaks indifferently with eyes that seem to be looking somewhere far off.

“The vampires reigned, but eventually knowledge regarding the weakness of vampires spread among humans, and the hunters became the prey.”

Vampires have three weaknesses.

First: They die when their heart is pierced. Their astonishing regenerative abilities

made them feared as immortals, but they can no longer regenerate when their heart is destroyed. This fact lent great strength to the humans who used to fear vampires.

Second: They cannot maintain their powers if they do not regularly suck blood. Vampires who go without blood for a long time end up with strength not much different from that of normal humans. Their very race requires them to coexist with, and never annihilate, humans.

Third: They turn to ash upon being exposed to sunlight. No matter how strong the vampire may be and how weak the human may be, anyone can kill a vampire by making use of sunlight. There are any number of methods, such as setting traps or destroying their homes. Thus daytime became the execution ground of many, many vampires.

“You sure know a lot about this.”

Claire is impressed while listening to Milia share her knowledge.

There are very few humans who know anything much about vampires.

The reason is because vampires are thought of as something from the distant past, and casualties due to them in recent day is almost zero. That is, with the sole exception of Outlaw City.

The Magic Swordsmen Guild staff who headed the meeting earlier also admitted to never having seen a vampire firsthand, and did not know anything beyond what the ancient texts they found said.

“The humans succeeded in whittling down their numbers. Eventually, vampires disappeared from the night of the world, and everyone began to forget that they ever existed. But then, a thousand years ago, a certain horrifying incident occurred. On a night when a Red Moon hung in the sky, a single country was wiped out of existence in one night. It was a country so small that now even its name has been entirely forgotten. But it was undoubtedly the work of Elizabeth the Queen of Blood and her kin.”

“By ‘Red Moon,’ are you referring to how the moon has been strangely red lately.....?”

Milia nods in response to Claire’s question.

“The Red Moon significantly boosts the strength and abilities of vampires and their kin. On the night of the rise of the Red Moon, the vampires who had been driven into a corner rose up in revolt. The Red Moon lasted a total of three days. Within the first night, one country was obliterated. Within the remaining two nights, three more countries were damaged beyond the point of recovery. When the Red Moon finally went down, the Queen of Blood and her kin abruptly withdrew and hid themselves, waiting until the day when humans forget about them entirely.....”

“Are you implying that very soon the vampires will once again rise in revolt?”

Milia nods.

“They see humans as nothing more than livestock. The humiliation of having been cornered by livestock is something that they can never forget. Right now, the Queen of Blood has yet to awake from her thousand year long sleep. The one who is leading the vampires of Outlaw City is an aide of hers named Crimson. When the Red Moon begins, Crimson will surely resuscitate the Queen of Blood. If he succeeds, then the tragedy that took place a thousand years ago will be repeated again.....”

“Don’t tell me, ‘sacrifice’ means.....?”

“To revive the Queen of Blood, the lifeblood of a young man who possesses abundant magic is necessary. Claire’s younger brother will surely be presented to the Queen of Blood as the sacrifice.....”

“As if I would let that happen! When does the Red Moon begin?!”

Milia looks through one of the holes puncturing the wall at the moon in the sky. The moon is already dyed deep crimson.

From far away can be heard voices that seem to be shouting.

“Just now, it has begun.....”

Then screams reverberate throughout the night of Outlaw City.

“IT, IT’S A GHOOOUULLLLL!! R-, RUN AWAAAYYYYYY!!”

People run helter-skelter in panic and desperation as the smell of blood suddenly pervades the air.

“The Rampage has begun..... the Red Moon grants them tremendous power. But the cost for that is an insatiable thirst for blood. This is where everything starts.....”

“!! What about Sid?! He’s in the Red Tower, right?!”

“Wait.”

Right as Claire is about to rush out, she is called back by Milia.

“Crimson will surely perform the revival ritual when the Red Moon is the deepest shade of red, because that is the moment when the ritual will have the highest chance of success. So, there is still about half a day’s time.”

“Half a day? Wouldn’t that be in the afternoon then?”

“The Red Moon continues for three days. During those three days, day never breaks. Don’t worry, I have a plan.”

So saying, Milia begins pulling up some of the worn-out floorboards.

“For the sake of this day, I..... have dug this hole.”

“.....Hole?”

Claire tilts her head.

That..... is definitely a hole.

Beneath where the floorboards used to be, there is a hole big enough for one person to crawl through at a time.

“The Red Tower is normally so overrun with vampires and ghouls that it’s impossible to enter. However, now that the Red Moon has begun, almost all of them have gone out. Which means this is a golden opportunity to sneak in.....”

“In other words, this hole.....”

“Sneaking in from aboveground would be difficult. That’s why I dug this hole to connect to the Red Tower from below.”

“.....I see.”

“I wish to confirm one last time. My aim is to kill Elizabeth the Queen of Blood. Your aim is to rescue your younger brother. We are agreed to help each other, yes?”

“Yes we are. I’ll be in your care, Milia.”

“And I in yours as well, Claire.”

Both of them spontaneously reach out to exchange a handshake.

“Now that that’s settled, let’s get going. Wait for me, Sid.”

Without hesitation, Claire heads into the hole.

While waiting for Claire to go first, Milia turns around and takes one last look at the red moon.

There seems to be traces of sorrow quivering within her eyes.

“Elizabeth-sama, it won’t be long now.....”

After murmuring to herself, she proceeds to follow Claire.

Chapter 97

Rampage... The Streets are... Blood... Run...

After seeing off her last customer of the day, Mary closes the door to her room.

Within the room illuminated only by moonlight, she spares but a glance for the disturbed bedsheets as she picks up the underwear strewn on the floor.

In the same motion, she puts them up, then dives into her bed. Her beautiful face is buried into her pillow.

A lot happened today, so she is really tired now. Today's customers weren't particularly good either..... let's just go to sleep.

"Nn—"

However, the moist sheets and the smell permeating the room is just too uncomfortable. So she gets up with a sigh to open the windows.

The gag-inducing smell dissipates, in exchange for which the din from outside comes in.

"I wonder what happened....."

Usually, this is the time around when the sun rises, when even the red-light district is wrapping up work and heading to bed.

In spite of that, today the sky is showing no traces of lightening up, and the entire city seems restless somehow.

In the sky is still a blood-red moon, hanging there prominently.

When she looks further off, she sees flames enveloping several buildings.

It's a fire.

A faint whiff of smoke reaches her, carried by the wind.

But even before that, a raw, rust-like smell is stimulating her nose.

The fire is far away, and seems very unlikely to reach where she is.

However, something still seems different from normal. Passers-by are dashing through the streets. Why are they in such hurry?

It's just a fire.

As Mary is leaning against her windowsill, the red moonlight illuminates her in a bewitching manner. Her black lingerie stands out in sharp contrast to her white skin. Her purplish red hair stands out vividly even under the unusual shade of moonlight.

When such a beautiful girl stands at her windowsill with only her underwear on, normally men would stop to gawk.

But today, there isn't a single such person.

With somewhat cold eyes, Mary looks down upon the red-light district and the faraway fire.

After being sold at 13, she's spent 5 years in this city. Everyone who comes to Outlaw City dreams at the beginning about getting back out. But with the passage of time, such emotions thinned out within her as she became colored by Outlaw City.

But hope has not entirely died out yet within her.

It might be easier if she gives up. She has been entertaining this thought recently.

Mary is one of the leading prostitutes in the red-light district, but she is not *the* top. Her proprietress had said that she believes Mary could reach the top if she gets serious about it.

Surely that kind of a life is also not a mistake. Forgetting everything and just indulging herself in nights of ecstasy.....

"Haah....."

It's been a while since she last thought about the outside. Surely this is the way how everyone becomes assimilated into this city.

Mary moves to close the window. But that instant.

"Kyah!"

A beast has leapt into her room through the window.

No, it is not a beast. It is a human-like figure that acts like a beast — a ghoul.

"Ah, aa....."

Mary crawls backward on the floor.

The ghoul sneers with its sharp fangs bared..... then pounces towards Mary in her underwear.

As tears stream down her face, Mary resolves herself.

"I remember advising you to run away last time....."

Together with those words, the ghoul is diced up in midair.

Lumps of meat fall all over the room, and blood splatters.

"Y-, you are....."

She recognizes that figure and that jet-black blade. Mary feels her heart beating loudly in her ears.

The person standing there in a jet-black longcoat..... is Shadow.

"The Rampage has begun..... Behold, the streets are stained with blood....."

"The streets.....?"

Mary covers herself with her bedsheets and peers outside.

"How, how can this be..... this is terrible....."

Sure enough, the road below is stained with glistening blood.

Lumps of meat strewn all over. Ghouls rampaging about. Prostitutes who ran too late being attacked.

“Watch ou-.....!”

Seeing her senior among those being attacked, Mary cannot help but to cry out.

However, the next instant, the pouncing ghoul is reduced to lumps of meat.

“The Rampage is upon us..... A tempest of blood demands its due.....”

Beside her is a man in a jet-black longcoat.

“ae?!”

Mary whirls around, only to discover that there is no longer anyone standing beside herself.

“Run, lest you be swallowed up by this madness.....”

“You, are you.....”

That moment, a scream echoes out from somewhere not too far off.

The instant Mary’s attention is diverted by it, Shadow disappears once again.

“.....the Rampage is..... blood..... run.....”

With a voice that seems to emanate from nowhere specific, parts of a ghoul are sent flying into the sky.

When she takes a second look, Mary realizes that the lumps of meat lining the street all came from ghouls.

She can no longer see the man himself, but the chain of explosions of ghoul parts is steadily growing further away.

Mary quickly throws on some clothes over her underwear, then packs a carry bag and

hurries downstairs.

Mary's intuition proved true after all. Shadow really did come to save her.

“Thank you, Shadow-san.....”

Thus Mary manages to slip away amidst all the chaos. With strong resolve in her heart to one day repay this debt to Shadow.....

Chapter 98

Tough Lady

When I woke up, I found Outlaw City in an uproar.

Even though it is time for day to break, it is still dark outside, the red moon is still hanging in the sky, and ghouls are going berserk on the streets.

This is.....

Could this possibly be.....

“It must be the ‘Rampage’.....”

The all-important keyword that that person who called herself Milia mentioned. Her prediction had come true.

It seems that an emergency meeting has been called to session at the base to determine the magic swordsmen’s response.

I, however, sneak out of the base and stand atop a high building, having put on my jet-black longcloak.

“Finally, this moment has come.....!”

Without doubt, this..... is the real deal.

This is a real life, nay, a larger than life vampire event!

I chuckle profoundly from behind my mask while making my jet-black longcloak flutter.

So the keywords this time are ‘Red Moon,’ ‘Rampage,’ and ‘Queen of Blood’.....

Oh, and there’s also that Ancient Vampire Hunter character. I would very much love to make contact with her again during this event.

It would probably be very difficult, but I've got to set things up towards the most fun route.

This flow of events seems to indicate that the Queen of Blood is going to be the final aim.

Which means I can mess up the Red Tower *and* loot it during the commotion. Two birds with one stone. As for everything else, I can just maintain a high level of flexibility and play by the ear.

Nee-san still hasn't made it back yet. But she's a tough lady, so I'm sure she'll be fine.

So then, let's go hunt some ghouls while spreading word of the event.



The Magic Swordsmen Guild has lost the initiative.

Even though the gathered first-rate magic swordsmen are managing to hold the rampaging ghouls back, the sheer number of ghouls, on top of their strengthened state due to the Red Moon, gives the magic swordsmen no choice but to retreat.

"Iron Arm Glein has also been wounded! We're drawing back!"

"You fucktards! You guys are supposed to hold that position! Who the fuck is going to take your place?!"

"Like we give a fuck! We've got someone injured here! Or what, are you telling us to die?!"

The magic swordsmen on the large street that find themselves encircled by ghouls are desperately putting up resistance, but the seemingly endless flood of ghouls is steadily whittling them down.

"Everyone! Please do not make arbitrary decisions by yourselves!"

Claudia, the elite staff member in charge of leading this mission to subjugate the Queen of Blood, is shouting at the top of her lungs. But morale is scraping rock bottom, and the front line collapsing is now merely a matter of time.

The street is already buried under piles of ghoul corpses.

As expected of magic swordsmen skilled enough to be accepted for this mission, the individual strength of each and every one of them is overwhelming in comparison to ghouls.

However, none of them imagined such an enormous number of ghouls to descend onto them.

This is surely a crime that's been planned and prepared for over a very long period of time.

To think that they brought along so many magic swordsmen and yet still cannot even reach the foot of the Red Tower. So this is the power of someone who reigns over a third of Outlaw City, the Queen of Blood.....

Even within the Magic Swordsmen Guild, it's long been a taboo to touch Outlaw City. Claudia now understands the reason why, and curses the decision made by the upper echelons of the Guild who ignored it.

“Those accursed old fogies.....”

Claudia mutters language that she would normally never say out loud. That sexual harassment foggy who rubs her ass every chance he gets, that pervy foggy who always stares at her chest, that deluded foggy who persistently invites her to his room at nighttime, and then..... ahhh god, there's no end to them.

She decides to ignore the orders from above and command a retreat. If those fogies demote her for it, then she'll sock them one in their faces then resign.

However, they are currently stranded within the sea of ghouls.

Retreat would not be easy either.

“It's already too late, huh.....”

She laughs in self-mockery. This is a call that she could have made much earlier on.

Having delayed making this decision to save herself for the sake of protecting herself makes her the biggest fool out of them all.

Claudia draws the sword on her waist and steels her resolve.

She has no intention of putting her own life on the line for those accursed fogies from the Guild, and she honestly doesn't care a whit what happens to these self-serving musclebrained magic swordsmen.

However, the responsibility of her having delayed this decision is something that she will bear herself.

“Retreat! I'll take the rear!”

In the first place, though she is now on the staff side of the Guild, her roots is as a magic swordswoman. Despite how she may look, she has confidence in her sword arm.

“Hell yea! She said retreat!”

“You said it, the rear is yours! Seeya then!”

The magic swordsmen quickly withdraw from the front line.

Even while slashing at the ghouls, Claudia is thinking ‘at least *one* person could have stayed behind to help!’

The ghouls are pressing in. The magic swordsmen are backing off. Then there is Claudia, struggling strenuously while trying to match the others' pace of retreat.

However, the burden of shouldering the rear guard all by herself is enormous, and she quickly reaches her limit.

One foot slips on the ground slick with blood. A ghoul pounces.

Then a magic swordsmen clad in jet-black descends before her.

“Be annihilated..... Jet-Black Whirlwind.”

The sword in the jet-black magic swordsman's hand grows to a length several times his height. Or so she thinks, the instant before a jet-black whirlwind roars all around.

All the surrounding ghouls are sliced into pieces. Within a literal blink of an eye, what previously seemed to be an endless sea of ghouls has been entirely annihilated.

“Ho-, how could this be.....”

Claudia, having fallen onto her butt, looks up at the jet-black magic swordsman in dumb amazement.

That ludicrous strength that could wipe out in an instant a group of ghouls that even first-rate magic swordsmen had no choice but to retreat in the face of.

Claudia is also a magic swordswoman, so she understands. She understands how unbelievable this man’s strength is.

Even the magic swordsmen who had been racing to be the first to get away have stopped in their tracks to stare in disbelief at the jet-black magic swordsman.

“The Rampage is already upon us..... it is already beyond the means of you lot.....”

So he says with a voice that sounds like a rumble from the depths of the earth while turning to face his back to them.

“Wh-, who exactly are you.....”

So Claudia asks that back.

“Mine name is Shadow..... he who lurks within shadows, he who hunts shadows.....”

Leaving those words behind, he flutters his jet-black longcoat while walking upon the carpet of blood. Claudia can only dazedly watch that back grow further away.

“So that... was Shadow.....”

Every single person finds themselves shuddering.

All of them have heard of that name. He is the man who attacked a magic swordsman academy, obliterated a holy ground, and handily overwhelmed Princess Iris and the Goddess of War even when they came at him together during the Festival of the God of War.

However, not a single person present here actually believed those rumors, thinking themselves smarter than that.

Though it is undoubtable that there *was* an incident, the specific details about what went down are dubious, to put it mildly.

Above all, who would believe that there is someone capable of overwhelming both Iris and the Goddess of War at the same time?

Even Claudia did not really believe that rumor. It is exactly because she is a professional of the Magic Swordsmen Guild, and not a mere layman who knows nothing about the sword, that she determined that story to be nonsensical.

However, after seeing his strength up close just now, Claudia can no longer deny those rumors. If it is Shadow, then such evident superiority might not be so unbelievable after all.....

But then that begs the question, why is he here in Outlaw City?

Also, why did he help out members of the Magic Swordsmen Guild.....?

The Guild has declared a bounty on both him and his organization, Shadow Garden. There should be no reason for him to save them.

Could it be that he has some reason that drove him to do everything that he did? Could it possibly be that there is something much deeper going on behind the incidents that he was involved in?

She should look into it.

“Shadow..... I will repay you this debt one day.....”

So Claudia declares in a soft voice towards that back that by now grown much smaller.

Kotsu, kotsu, rings his receding footsteps.

In the direction where he is heading soars the Red Tower. And above his head shines a crimson moon.

Chapter 99

The Three Currents

“Crimson-sama, the sacrifice has been prepared.”

“Is that so.....”

Crimson turns his eyes, which had been looking down upon Outlaw City, up towards the moon hanging in the dark sky. His handsome face is framed by flowing wine-red hair.

“The Red Moon..... is not yet.....”

The moon is stained deep red. However, it is not yet enough. The most opportune time is still a little ways off.

“How is the suppression of the city coming along?”

“The suppression began according to plan. However.....”

“However?”

Crimson turns around to look straight at the subordinate who seems to be struggling for words.

The man continues even while visibly unnerved by his gaze.

“However..... there are certain areas where we are meeting much more resistance than we had expected.”

“The Magic Swordsmen Guild?”

“No, the Guild is not a problem at all. There are three people putting up significant resistance. One of them is Yukime the Enchantress, another is Juggernaut the Tyrant.”

“Those two.....”

Crimson scowls while looking back down upon Outlaw City. The ghouls are steadily expanding their influence, but there are three currents trying to stand in their way.

Yukime the Enchantress, the monarch who reigns from the White Tower. Juggernaut the Tyrant, who reigns from the Black Tower. These two have always been a pain in his side. He doesn't want to admit it, but in terms of personal fighting strength, Crimson himself is a notch below the two of them.

However, that is only until today.

The Red Moon has begun. The moment his queen is revived, even those two will sink within the sea of blood.

"Kukuku..... let them be. They won't reach here anyways. The moment our Queen of Blood is revived shall be the moment of our victory....."

While smirking, Crimson walks towards the coffin sitting in the center of the room.

"Our beloved queen..... very soon, the world shall be ours once again....."

He gently strokes the coffin, before suddenly coming to a start.

"Wait, you said there are three. Who's the third?"

Crimson only knows of two powers that possess the strength to resist their kin when bolstered by the Red Moon.

"A-, about that, we actually are not clear yet. However, he has already wiped out a very significant number of ghouls, as well as all the vampires that we sent as reinforcements."

"What did you say.....?"

"Apparently his name is Shadow. It is our assessment that he is the largest threat among all three....."

"Shadow....."

Crimson knits his brows together while muttering that name.



There are three currents flowing towards the Red Tower.

First is the frenzied 'Tyrant.'

This man is a hulk of a man with swarthy skin.

Swinging around a lump of metal in the shape of a gigantic nata hatchet, he is bisecting ghouls with brute strength.

Not a single person can approach him, as they would be reduced to minced meat the moment they do so.

Another is the dancing 'Enchantress.'

She is a foxkin with silver hair and bewitching beauty.

Her unusual nine tails glimmers under the moonlight.

She appears to be dancing with a pair of metal-ribbed fans while slicing ghouls to pieces.

The moment their eyes are stolen by the flash of luscious skin under her kimono is their last, right before they are sent off to a trip that they will never again wake from.

After massacring large numbers of ghouls, these two currents happen to intersect.

"Drop dead, you whore!"

"What a truly troublesome man you are as always."

Tyrant's giant nata is skillfully parried by Enchantress.

The giant nata slams into the ground, raising a cloud of dust.

“It’s been a while, Enchantress.”

Juggernaut the Tyrant sneers with a fiendish face.

“I didn’t want to have to see your face again.”

Yukime the Enchantress sighs disgustedly.

“As an aside to finishing off those blood-sucking bats, how about you die too?”

Juggernaut lightly brandishes his giant nata.

“I dislike insistent men.....”

Yukime brings her metal-ribbed fans up.

But the moment right before the two are about to spring into action, the last current joins them.

A man wearing a jet-black longcoat silently descends from the night sky.

Then the three ghouls that were following him are diced up in an instant.

Tyrant is astonished at the man’s bearing.

The smoothness of his movements, that instantaneous power, and that overwhelming strength hidden underneath the surface. It is at a level where even Tyrant has no choice but to give his acknowledgement.

Enchantress is in admiration at the man’s swordsmanship.

The beauty in his sword, the perfection of his techniques that has been rid of all excess. Despite how long she has lived, it is her first time seeing anything like it. That which can even be called a sword dance at the highest level of art leaves Enchantress sighing deeply in wonder.

“You bastard, who are you.....”

“This gentleman, who might you be.....”

The two voiced their queries at the same time.

The man in jet-black turns around, then flicks his sword to rid it of the blood on its surface.

“Mine name is Shadow. I am he who lurks within shadows and hunts shadows.....”

Thus met the three currents.

Chapter 100

War of Monsters

The three people keep each other in check with their eyes alone.

Yukime's are clear like water, Juggernaut's are black and shining like those of a bird of prey, and Shadow's are red and glowing inhumanly.

"Shadow.....? Where the fuck have I heard that name before."

"Rumors of the militant group Shadow Garden from outside. That's the name of the head of that group."

"Ahh, that's right. So this guy is that rumored Shadow."

"I had thought those rumors mere lies, but this gentleman's strength does seem to lend credit to those rumors."

Shadow is being scrutinized by the two, yet shows no sign of being bothered by it.

The moment a gust of wind blows, Shadow's sword rings out, Yukime's metal-ribbed fan snaps open, and Juggernaut's giant sword is poised on his shoulder.

The wordless face off continues for a while longer.

"Are we three having a marriage interview? Or shall we begin a deathmatch?"

It is Juggernaut who first breaks the silence.

"Then I wish to express my desire to join hands with Shadow-han. What say you, Shadow-han?"

(T/N: Yukime speaks in an Osakan accent (as do most female foxy characters in anime, as it's considered more bewitching), so she uses *-han* instead of *-san*.)

Yukime directs amorous eyes towards Shadow.

“I’d stay wary of that shitty vixen if I were you. The moment you let down your guard is the moment she stabs you in the back.”

Juggernaut laughs through his nose.

“How pointless.”

In spite of this atmosphere, Shadow turns his back towards them without hesitation.

“The Red Moon has risen and the Rampage has begun..... I do not have the time to mess around with you people.”

“Hah, someone feels sure of themself.”

“You sound like you know something. ‘Red Moon’..... why do I feel like I’ve heard that somewhere before.....”

“The old hag must be forgetting things due to age. Sucks to be you.”

“You be quiet. Just as Shadow-han says, fighting among ourselves now is meaningless. Even I am feeling infuriated about my children being attacked by ghouls. Isn’t it the same for you?”

“Don’t lump me in with you. Outlaw City doesn’t need three towers. I was merely thinking that it’s high time to get rid of at least one of them.”

“So we are agreed to focus on the Queen of Blood for now?”

“Hah, seeya later then, old hag. Next time I see you, you’re dead.”

Juggernaut glares at Yukime and Shadow, then leaves.

Seeing Juggernaut go off, Yukime calls Shadow back.

“Would you wait a moment, kind sir? Shadow-han, I actually know about you. I manage the red-light district in this city, you see.”

Shadow looks at Yukime with a backward glance.

“It seems that several of my girls had been saved by Shadow-han, so we are in your

debt. If it pleases you, I would very much like to express my gratitude some day.”

“I don’t need thanks..... I had no intention of saving anyone.”

“But everyone is truly thankful. You are a humble man, it seems. I’ll always be waiting, so feel free to drop by the White Tower whenever you feel like it.....”

With that, Yukime gives him a bow.

“Well then, until next we meet.”

Leaving behind a coquettish smile, Yukime heads towards the Red Tower, and Shadow’s figure also melts into the darkness.



The Watchdog is waiting for prey at the Red Tower.

Sitting in front of the Red Tower while hugging his emaciated body, he laughs hideously with his face twitching.

He who was a mass murderer called by the name of the White Demon..... was previously a knight.

Serving as the Grand Commander of a certain knight order in a certain country, he once cut the figure of the model knight protecting his country and his people with his white uniform and shining white hair.

However, his true identity is a mass murderer roaming the streets of the city at night. He has loved cutting people up ever since he was born. Red blood, screams, and faces distorted with despair. Only by stealing other people’s lives did he feel alive himself.

However, a certain day, a colleague discovered his crimes. That instant, he turned into the White Demon.

Within one night, the White Demon massacred his entire knight order, then escaped. Along his escape route, he continued killing people, until he finally arrived at Outlaw City.

There was nothing and no one that he feared. He believed himself to be at the very top of the food chain.

However, that delusion led him to challenge the Red Tower and become shattered. The man feared as the White Devil could not lift even a finger against Crimson. He was single-sidedly toyed with, until he pathetically begged for his life.

Thus he became the Watchdog.

He was robbed of the freedom to kill people.

For the man who lived merely to kill people, that was akin to robbing him of the very reason for his existence.

However, the perfect opportunity for him to kill people has finally come.

“Hihi.....”

The Red Moon rose, and a flood of ghouls and vampires vacated the Red Tower.

There is no longer anyone left who could find fault with what he does. As long as the Red Moon continues, he is free to kill.

And that is why the White Demon is waiting for prey. Not as the Watchdog, but as the White Demon, he is patiently waiting to taste the sheer bliss of killing once again.

It is rumored that the Magic Swordsmen Guild are here to subjugate the Queen of Blood. The White Demon is almost praying for someone to reach the Red Tower.

Then finally.

With violent footsteps, his long-awaited prey has arrived.

“Hi..... hihi?”

The White Demon raises his head in great joy, only to see a hulk of a man with swarthy skin.

His entire body is rippling with bulging muscles, and he is carrying a giant nata even longer than his height.

The sharp eyes glaring at the White Demon are filled with overwhelming violence. There is no room for doubt, this man is none other than one of the monarchs of Outlaw City, Juggernaut the Tyrant.

“You’re in my fucking way. Don’t be.”

“Hi.....”

In a split second, the White Demon averts his gaze and steps aside.

The White Demon now understands that there are existences much more powerful than himself. The monarchs of Outlaw City and their close aides are people that he must never raise his hand against. That is what he has learned after challenging Crimson.

“In my fucking way.”

Tyrant stands before the door, then destroys it with a single swing of his giant nata.

“Hi?!”

The White Demon cowers to the side and waits for Tyrant to pass, before looking at the tragically destroyed door.

It used to be a sturdy door braced with iron. Even magic swordsmen would not be able to break it easily. The man who was able to break such a door with but a single swing has just entered the Red Tower.

The White Demon shudders with fear at imagining what is going to happen from now on.

That moment, he hears a sound from behind.

Those reserved and gentle footsteps are undoubtedly that of a woman’s. Female flesh is soft and feels great to cut.

A fiendish smile comes over the White Demon’s face as he turns around.

Before his eyes is a woman so bewitchingly beautiful that she seems to not be someone of this world.

She has luscious silver hair and black fox ears. And there are two metal-ribbed fans carried in the obi of her kimono.

That's still fine.

But behind her back, there are nine tails waving to and fro indolently.

"Hi?!"

There is no room for doubt. This woman is none other than one of the monarchs of Outlaw City, Yukime the Enchantress.

"Would you kindly make way?"

"Hihi!"

The White Demon has already stepped aside before being asked to. This is another person that he must never raise his hand against. He shivers in the corner and waits for Enchantress to pass, before looking up at the Red Tower.

Is this tower going to be fine, now that both Tyrant and Enchantress have entered? Is a war of monsters about to go down?

That moment, he hears a sound from behind.

Hearing those *kotsu, kotsu* footsteps, the White Demon sneers.

Both Tyrant and Enchantress have come. There is no existence in this city that stands above them.

As expected, before his eyes is an unfamiliar man in a black coat.

He has on a jet-black longcoat, his hood is pulled forward deeply, and his face is hidden behind a mask.

However, this man's strength cannot be read from his bearing. When someone reaches the level of the White Demon, they would be able to generally read their opponent's strength even before the fighting starts. However, not a hint of strength can be read from this longcoat man.

But how much can he amount to in comparison to Tyrant and Enchantress?

".....Hihi!!"

The instant the man in black enters within striking distance, the White Demon slices with his sword.

He's dead.

The next moment after thinking that, the White Demon finds himself looking up at the night sky.

"Hi.....?"

As he looks around in sheer confusion, he sees the lower half of his body still standing.

His lower body has been separated from his upper body. It crumples to the ground while spurting copious amounts of blood.

With that, the White Demon finally realizes that he has been bisected.

"Hi..... Hi....."

Just as he expected the man in black who had bisected him to enter the Red Tower, he instead plants a foot on the wall of the tower, then runs up it perpendicularly.

"Hi?!"

The White Demon doubts his dimming eyes even while losing blood.

However, that was not the end of it. The man in black suddenly stops halfway up the tower, punches a gigantic hole in the wall, then goes inside from there.

What sheer absurdity.

The White Demon understands that he had raised his hand against a living creature that he should never have raised his hand against.

"Hi..... hi....."

The very last instant before his life leaves him, he thinks, “Wait, isn’t that area where the treasure room is?”

Chapter 101

The Rumored Shadow Garden

Hearing *gan, gan, gan*, the sound of something being struck, Beta looks up from the book that she is reading.

Quickly panning around the spacious archive room, she notices a certain part of the wall vibrating in concert with the sounds.

Is someone pounding on the wall from the other side?

The instant she thinks that, the wall suddenly collapses, and two female figures appear from within the cloud of dust.

“OUCH!”

“aU.....”

The black-haired teenage girl has planted her face into the ground, while the red-haired woman is leaning out above her.

“Owww. This wall is apparently much more brittle than it looks.”

Beta recognizes the face of the black-haired girl who is looking up while rubbing her nose. She is Claire Kagenou, the elder sister of Beta’s own master.

“That’s why I told you to do it more carefully.....”

So says the red-haired woman with an expressionless face.

“If we take our sweet time then we won’t make it! Milia, would you mind getting off already?”

“Ah, sorry about that, Claire.”

The red-haired woman gets off of Claire’s back, then the two stand up and pat the dust

from each other's clothing.

"So, where are we now anyways?"

"The underground area of the Red Tower, I believe....."

"This is the underground archive of the Red Tower."

It is Beta who offers an answer to clear the two's confusion.

That causes the two to finally notice Beta sitting in her chair.

".....It seems we've already been spotted."

"That's why I told you to do it more carefully....."

"Alright, I'm sorry. But from the look of things, we would have been spotted regardless."

The two draw their swords at the same time, facing off against Beta who is still seated in her chair.

Beta heaves a sigh then closes her book.

"Even I did not imagine that someone would come in through the wall. I'm supposed to finish off any and all witnesses, but....."

Beta shoots Claire a quick glance.

"That seems impossible in this case. You lot, stay."

So Beta covertly sends out a command. However, there seems to be only the three of them in this room.

"I have no intention of fighting. So would you kindly put your sword away, Claire-san?"

".....! You know me?"

"You are the latest champion of the Festival of the God of War, Claire Kagenou-san. Am I correct?"

“So I have become quite famous, it seems. Very well, state your affiliation and aim. Once I know you’re not an enemy, then I’ll draw back.”

“Claire!”

“We have no time to engage in meaningless fights, right? She doesn’t look like someone related to the Queen of Blood. And also..... she would make for a pretty difficult opponent.”

So says Claire with sharp eyes.

Beta is just nonchalantly sitting in a chair, but the atmosphere around her is one that does not seem easy to cut in.

“So it would seem.”

With her black bodysuit and mask, she truly does not look like someone related to the Queen of Blood. If anything, she seems much like an intruder like Claire themselves.

“My affiliation and aim, huh..... Let me just say that I’m also an intruder of the Red Tower, same as you two.”

“More details.”

“It might get a bit long.”

“Be detailed and brief.”

“What a tall order.”

Beta shrugs her shoulders.

“I am Beta of Shadow Garden. I have some business here in the Red Tower, so here I am.”

“Heeh. Why is the rumored Shadow Garden in this place?”

“Hmm..... I wonder how much can I tell you. Even I have things that I can reveal and things that I can’t. Let me see..... for a certain reason, we are conducting research into demon possession, for which we want a sample of a progenitor’s blood.”

“Demon possession.....?!”

“Why would you need a progenitor’s blood for that.....”

Claire reacted to ‘demon possession,’ while Milia reacted to ‘progenitor’s blood.’

“The blood of demon possession and the blood of a progenitor both have the same origin, and the inheritance of blood led to expression of differing symptoms. Or at least, that is the hypothesis that we have come upon in our research.”

“That is sacrilege towards progenitors.....”

Milia’s eyes turn sharp, and her grip on her sword strengthens.

“As I said, it is but a hypothesis. We have no intention of profaning progenitors. However, for the sake of verification, we need a sample of a progenitor’s blood. May I ask why you seem insulted anyways? Ancient Vampire Hunter-san?”

“——?! So you know about me as well.....”

“I’ve heard the rumors, at least.”

“I see..... well, if you don’t intend to get in our way, then do as you like.”

“I sure will.”

Milia sheathes her sword while still glaring at Beta, in response to which Beta merely shrugs her shoulders and re-opens the book that she was in the middle of reading.

“As expected of the archives of a vampire that has lived for over a thousand years. It is packed with precious documents and reference materials. So, Claire-san, are you satisfied as well?”

So asks Beta while reading her book.

Claire looks between Milia and Beta while seemingly thinking about something.

“Tell me just one thing.”

Claire turns towards Beta with a serious face.

“If I can answer you.”

Feeling that gaze, Beta also looks up.

“Is there a way to heal demon possession?”

Beta does not answer immediately.

She stares fixedly at Claire’s face, seemingly thinking about something.

“That..... I cannot answer. However, I’ll just say that it is not something that Claire-san needs to worry about.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“It means exactly as it sounds.”

Beta returns to her book and turns a page, as if she no longer has anything else to say.

Claire clicks her tongue softly and turns her heels.

“Let’s go.”

However, the moment the two are about to leave the archive, Beta calls out to them.

“Wait a moment. Claire-san, can you tell me the reason why you have joined hands with Ancient Vampire Hunter and stormed this Red Tower?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“Just curious, that’s all.”

Claire scowls.

“My younger brother Sid was kidnapped by the Queen of Blood. If I don’t save him soon, he’ll be offered as sacrifice to the Queen of Blood.”

“Your younger brother.....”

Beta tilts her head.

“IS THAT TRUE?!”

Abruptly a fourth voice rings out in this room where it seemed only the three of them were present.

When the three direct their eyes towards where the new voice had come from, they see a woman standing there who had been unnoticed so far. She is also wearing a black bodysuit and a mask that covers her face.

“666, control yourself.”

“But..... I apologize.....”

666 visibly suppresses a desire to bolt off immediately and steps back with head hanged.

“You satisfied? We’re leaving then.”

Claire places a hand on the door to the archive.

“One last thing. Is it really no longer an option for her to once again tread on a path towards a land of peace.....?”

“What does that mean?”

Claire turns around.

However, Beta is not looking at Claire. Beta is staring fixedly at Milia.

“Ah, wait.”

Milia turns her face away, then wordlessly pushes the door open and exits the archive. Claire follows after her in a hurry.

Within the archive that has gone silent, only the sound of flipping pages continues for a while.

“666, that was disgraceful.....”

So says Beta suddenly while reading her book.

“I am deeply sorry.....”

666 lowers her head.

“Lambda has acknowledged your strength. Even Alpha-sama has expectations of you. This is a demerit. You two should have also properly kept her in check.”

“My apologies.”

“I’m very sorry.”

Two more girls have materialized beside 666.

“This is 666’s first mission out in the field. 664, as the squad leader, this is your responsibility.”

“Yes, ma’am.....”

“Be more careful from here on. I will re-confirm. Our mission is a request from the Research Room to retrieve a sample of progenitor blood. However, Shadow-sama said that he would deal with the Queen of Blood personally, so we cannot arbitrarily move about on our own. So, until Shadow-sama arrives, we will be examining the materials in this archive and collecting important documents. You all may now return to your duties.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Having received their instructions, the three quickly return to what they were doing before.

666 turns around to look at Beta just once. Within her memories, there is a certain author who bears great resemblance to Beta.

Chapter 102

Two Lasses

Just as Milia had predicted, the Red Tower has indeed been almost emptied of vampires and ghouls.

However, they are not entirely absent, so Milia and Claire are encountering the occasional attacks.

Claire's sword flashes, and a vampire's head flies off. However, the vampire is still moving.

"Pierce the heart!"

Obediently listening to Milia's instructions, Claire stabs her sword through the headless vampire's heart. Immediately, cracks begin running throughout the vampire's body, starting from the heart area. Red light shines out from between the cracks, then the entire body crumbles into ash.

Behind Claire's back, Milia is finishing off the very last one.

Being able to come this far without suffering even a single wound from the fights against vampires is, in large, due to Milia's help.

Despite not having as much magic as Claire, Milia more than makes up for it with her skill with the sword. And above all else, she is extremely familiar with fighting against vampires.

Many vampires fight by relying solely on their superior physical abilities, but there is the occasional one that is able to use their mind to some degree. Coupled with their inhuman movements and astonishing regenerative powers, they can make for very difficult opponents indeed.

However, Milia is able to read their next moves as if she has thoroughly mastered fighting against vampires, moving quickly and accurately exactly as needed.

Claire now fully understands that Milia's aid is a definite must in order to save her younger brother.

But still, even so——Claire cannot help but to inquire.

“Are you hiding something from me?”

So Claire asks as Milia looks down at the last pile of ash with somewhat sorrowful eyes.

“What do you mean.....”

Milia turns around with an expressionless face.

“You were acting a bit strange back there at the archive. It almost felt as if you were sympathetic towards the vampires. Isn't it your goal to kill the Queen of Blood?”

“Yes, I will kill her.”

“Is that so. Then let me ask this: why are you so knowledgeable about vampires? Anyone can tell just by watching you fight. Undoubtedly, you know about vampires, much more so than any other person.”

“That's because I live solely for the purpose of killing the Queen of Blood.....”

“And I'm saying that it's unnatural if that's all there is to it. Alright, then what's the meaning behind those final words at the archive? Land of peace? Path for 'her' to tread?”

Claire's tone is growing stronger with each successive question.

However, Milia offers no answers.

“I won't get it if you just stay silent.”

“You are the same though.”

“What?”

“You also have something that you're hiding. Why are you so obsessed with demon

possession?”

“That’s.....”

“It’s common sense that there’s no way to heal demon possession. Everyone who contracts it dies.”

“.....So it seems.”

Claire bites her lip.

“Everyone has things they want to keep secret. Am I right?”

“.....Alright, then. We won’t pry into each other then. I’ll just help you with killing the Queen of Blood, and you’ll just help me with saving my younger brother. That will be the terms of our relationship.”

“That’s fine.....”

The two turn to continue climbing up the tower without looking at each other again.



“Hold on.”

After a while, Milia, who is in front, suddenly stops.

“What’s the matter?”

“Someone’s fighting up ahead.”

The two make their way over while treading silently. It seems that the fighting is happening on the other side of a door directly in their way. There is no other passage to take.

“We’ve no choice but to go in.....”

“Let’s open it a sliver and peek inside.”

Milia nods at Claire’s words, then peeks through from a thin crack.

The other side turns out to be a spacious hall. A huge opening reveals the red moon still hanging prominently in the sky.

Within is a swarthy man clutching the neck of a vampire and laughing in ridicule.

“You’re so weak.....”

The giant nata that the man is carrying is stained with blood, and all around him are chunks of flesh and piles of ash.

“You’re an officer, aren’t you? I seem to remember your face. Where is Crimson?”

So asks the swarthy man while tightening his grip on the vampire’s neck.

“B-, beats me.....”

“So you don’t intend to tell me.”

“There’s... no need... to tell you.....”

The instant the vampire says that, he changes into a red mist. It is the Mistify skill that only high class vampires can use.

“Oh?”

The swarthy man’s hand is now holding nothing, while the red mist gathers behind him.

The vampire’s arm materializes from there, his sharp claws quickly closing in on the swarthy man.

However, the swarthy man does not even look backwards.

“I have really good intuition.....”

The man simply swings his giant nata casually.

The incredible wind pressure reaches even the door, causing Milia and Claire to hurriedly close the door back.

When they look inside once again, they see parts of the vampire tragically lying around like pieces of minced meat.

The pieces quickly turn into ash.

“What is with that guy?”

Going by appearance, he is not a vampire. However, neither does he look like an ally.

“He is one of the monarchs of Outlaw City, Juggernaut the Tyrant. We would do best not to engage him in battle. The vampire that he just killed is the third most skilled officer from the Queen of Blood’s faction.”

“That was their third.....”

The contrast to Tyrant was so overwhelming that the vampire did not look like it at all.

“Let’s hide and just wait for him to leave.....”

Claire nods at Milia’s suggestion.

However, Tyrant’s voice rings out from the other side of the door.

“I said I have good intuition..... I know you’re there.”

“!?”

Immediately afterwards, the door is pulverized.

A gigantic nata suddenly appears through the door in a horizontal mowing attack. The two of them drop to the ground in evasion. Above their heads, the sound of violence roars past.

“Two lasses, huh.”

Beyond the broken door, Tyrant looks down on the two of them.

“This is the worst.”

“Guess we have no choice but to do it.”

The two of them draw their swords, as which Tyrant just sneers.

“You two don’t look like vampires, but..... you’re going to die here regardless.”

Then his giant nata is swung down.

Chapter 103

What are you doi-?!

The two leap to either side of the giant nata in evasion.

The giant nata slams into the ground, sending pieces of rubble flying all around.

From within the cloud of rubble, Tyrant glares at his two targets with sharp eyes, then settles on the one closer to him —— Claire.

He brazenly steps in, swinging his giant nata with both thick arms.

However, Claire is also closely watching Tyrant's movements.

Tyrant has both power and speed. However, his characteristics of his weapon forces him to make big motions. No matter how fast he may be, as long as Claire stays focused, she is able to follow with her eyes.

Sure enough, Claire manages to parry one such attack from Tyrant.

However, the weight of the attack turns out to be far beyond what she had expected. Her face turns into a grimace, and her follow up attack is delayed by a fraction of a second.

That tiny delay was more than enough for Tyrant.

“All you fucking swordsmen move the exact same fucking way!”

Before Claire had noticed, Tyrant has switched to a one-handed grip. His free arm explodes into Claire's face.

“CLAIRE!!”

Milia is about to dash forward in support, but Tyrant nails her down with his eyes.

Claire is sent flying and rolls on the ground. But immediately afterwards, she gets right

back up like it was nothing.

Then she spits out some blood.

“Oww~ You gave me a cut inside my mouth.....”

Claire scowls at Tyrant.

Tyrant skillfully raises one eyebrow and laughs. For some reason, there is a shallow cut on his abdomen.

“Most fucktards go down with just that one shot, though. You fucker, you’re used to this.”

“Thanks to a certain failure of a younger brother of mine.”

Claire bares her blood-stained teeth in a grin.

When receiving that punch just now, she had offset the impact and also slashed back at Tyrant at the same time.

Claire does a few practice swings as if to confirm the state of her body, then spits out some saliva stained with blood.

“A man who only knows violence. You have no finesse nor technique.”

Claire is putting up a strong front, but the situation is not as favorable as she is making it out to be. The wound inside her mouth is bleeding profusely, and her head is still slightly reeling from the shock of the punch just now. It was a mistake to go for the simultaneous exchange. The amount of damage from one attack is just too different between the two of them.

“You’re right, I’ve never learned a single technique. Cus I’ve never fucking needed to!”

With that, he lunges at Claire in attack.

Tyrant’s strength comes from his naturally high physical prowess, his large magic reserve, and his overwhelming battle sense. His fighting needs no techniques. For him, technique would be but mere shackles.

In the face of his brute force swing, Claire once again attempts a parry.

However, the shock of the attack ends up flowing into her body.

Her footing is unsteady. The damage to her brain has yet to dissipate.

“——!!”

Tyrant is not one who would overlook such an opening.

He raises his giant nata high.....

“I said, I have good instincts.....”

And swings it powerfully.

That attack misses Claire by a large margin, roaring past her with incredible speed.

Then a huge amount of blood splashes onto Claire’s face from the side.

“.....Eh?”

Claire is unharmed.

However, when she looks over, she sees, she sees Milia with her stomach sliced open.

Gobo.

She vomits blood, then falls to her knees.

“M-, MILIA!!”

“All you fucking swordsmen seriously move the exact same fucking way. That one was waiting the entire time for the instant I let down my guard. So I was waiting the entire time for that one to come for me. And that’s pretty much how it went.”

Tyrant laughs in ridicule with his fiendish face.

Claire rushes over in tears towards Milia, whose strength is leaving her.

“Milia..... Ahh, how can this be.....”

Milia’s wound is deep enough to reach her organs. It is fatal.

Claire places her hands over the wound and pours her magic in, despite knowing the futility of doing so.

However, Milia brushes away that hand.

“*Goho!* Blood..... *goho.*”

Milia is staring fixedly at Claire, seemingly pleading for something desperately even while vomiting blood.

“Milia, you shouldn’t move.....!”

Milia puts more strength into her grip, now almost beggingly.

“Claire..... I’m sorry..... Let me..... suck your blood.”

With that, Milia’s lips rushes for Claire’s.

“*Mu, mugugu?!*”

Claire’s eyes fly wide open in shock.

Milia sucks frantically at every drop of blood on Claire’s lips.

Then her eyes become stained with red.

“What are you doi-?!”

Claire tears Milia off. However, Milia is no longer there.

“Eh?!”

“*Guh?!*”

Claire’s cry of surprise and Tyrant’s grunt of pain overlap.

When Claire whirls around, she sees Tyrant, with one arm all cut up, looking upwards.

“Up.....? Eh, Milia?!”

Milia is floating in mid-air. Her eyes are shining red, and sharp fangs are protruding from her lips.

The wound on her stomach has completely closed up.

“So that’s what you are..... now *this* is fun!”

Tyrant grins like a carnivore, while Milia smiles sorrowfully.

Then Tyrant’s giant nata and Milia’s sword collide.

The two’s strength prove —— equal. No, Tyrant is still slightly on top.

“Not bad.....!”

“?!”

Both of them glare at each other amidst a shower of sparks.

However, the next instant —— a silly voice breaks the equilibrium.

“*Ei!*”

With that cry, Claire chucks her own sword.

“Wai-, hol-?!”

The sword flies straight towards Tyrant, causing him to dodge.

The sudden movement breaks his balance. No longer able to properly receive Milia’s strength, he is sent crashing into the far wall.

Unfortunately for him, the other side of that wall..... is the outside.

There is nothing below his feet. So he begins to freefall.

“N00000000000000000000000000000000.....”

His voice dwindles as he grows further.

The only ones left are Claire and Milia.

Claire goes to pick up her sword, while Milia looks on slightly guiltily.

Claire sheathes her sword, then the two look at each other awkwardly.

“Milia..... are you alright?”

So asks Claire in a hesitant voice.

“I’m fine, but..... I’m sorry, Claire.”

“I mean, well, um, it’s fine, but..... so, the thing that Milia was hiding.....”

“Yes, I am a vampire.....”

“I see.....”

“I’ll tell you everything. Who I am, what my real goal is. And also the truth behind the Queen of Blood.....”

With that, Milia begins talking with sorrow in her eyes.

Chapter 104

Don't You Dare Steal My Role, Girl

Milia used to be a subordinate of Elizabeth the Queen of Blood.

It was back when vampires still reigned over the night of the world. Even back then, Elizabeth was one of the strongest among progenitors.

Vampires hunted and fed on humans like it was a game. To many of them, humans were no more than mere livestock, to the degree where there were even countries ruled by vampires.

It was the golden age for vampires.

However, within such an era, Elizabeth was the only one who disapproved of feeding on humans more than necessary. She hunted only enough to sustain herself, and did not indiscriminately take lives. There were many vampires very vocally opposed to her way of life. Thus, despite her great strength, she only had very few subordinates.

But then the times turned, and it became the age of darkness for vampires.

It was a nightmarish age where humans hunted vampires. The fall of the first vampire monarchy triggered an explosion of revolts, causing the population of vampires to plunge in the blink of an eye.

At that time, Elizabeth was serving as feudal lord over a border domain within a small kingdom, helping to protect that border and country. She and her subordinates joined hands with the humans living there in farming, in hunting demon monsters, and in managing the land.

Within her territory, vampires did not look down on humans, and humans did not fear vampires. The reason why they were able to build and maintain that relationship was because the vampires there had sworn off human blood.

Vampires cannot live without feeding on human blood.

That claim which was thought to be common sense was proven wrong by Elizabeth personally.

The feeding compulsion that progenitors feel is several tens of times stronger than what normal vampires feel. The pain she bore was surely unimaginable. However, she managed to keep at it, constantly suffering pain akin to her arm being gnawed through. And her subordinates also followed suit.

These vampires who stopped feeding on blood gradually lost their powers, until their strength was reduced to that of normal humans.

However, in exchange, they gained something.

That something was the ability to live under sunlight. The vampires who stopped feeding on blood became capable of living in the same world of sunlight and beauty as humans.

Furthermore, they also gained a heart of peace. By abstaining from blood and living under the sun, their feeding compulsion gradually thinned out. They became able to adopt the same mentality as humans.

But among them, Elizabeth, as a progenitor, was the only one who remained powerful.

Her skin would still be burned when exposed to sunlight, forcing her to always carry a black parasol when going out. It wasn't so bad that she would turn into ash, but it was not uncommon for progenitors to have a certain degree of resistance against sunlight.

But most importantly, no matter how long she abstained from blood, her almost maddening feeding compulsion never abated.

But even within that agony, she went about everyday like everyone else, parasol in hand. One day, she gathered her subordinates and said to them, "Let us build a land of peace here. A land where humans and vampires can live together in happiness, without fear of discrimination or condemnation....."

With that, she began accepting vampire refugees from outside and bringing them under her protection.

Of course, that was with the condition of abstaining from blood. Among them were

those who scorned and opposed her. In all such cases, she would sadly but firmly expel them from her territory. If they refused to comply, she would end them with her own hand.

Before long, almost all surviving vampires came to seek refuge under her from the humans who were chasing them. Their population started to bounce back, humans and vampires co-existed, and their land prospered. Due to the combined influence of her own strength and the parent country's support, even vampire hunters stopped appearing in her territory.

Right there, right then, the 'Land of Peace' that she had been seeking truly existed.

She prayed fervently for everyone there to live in happiness.

However, the Land of Peace crumbled in a single night.

It was the night of a Red Moon.

She had locked herself in her castle to concentrate on resisting the feeding compulsion that was growing day by day.

At the time, Milia was her top aide, and Crimson was the second.

The two of them took turns bringing food to Elizabeth's room. And the incident occurred when it was Crimson's turn.

He had mixed human blood into her food.

The usual Elizabeth might very well have noticed it before eating. Even if she did eat some of it, she might very well have been able to suppress the compulsion.

However, it was during a Red Moon.

Unable to suppress the rebound from ingesting blood after such a long period of abstinence, she went on a rampage. Then the vampires under Crimson also raised the flag of revolt.

Vampires who could not see humans as anything besides livestock could not bear living together with said humans.

Elizabeth's dream..... the Land of Peace was revealed to be but an illusion.

It took only several hours for the rampaging Elizabeth and those under Crimson to devour every single human in the territory.

Her own followers, who had abstained from blood, were powerless and thus massacred along with the humans.

With the sole exception of Milia.

In order to stop Elizabeth, she chose to suck the blood from a dead corpse, crying the entire time.

Then she chased after Elizabeth, who had already left the territory by the time.

Elizabeth and the others' momentum was unstoppable. Within the very same day, they obliterated the small country that she had been protecting, tearing the kind-hearted king into shreds.

Milia did not make it time. All she could do was wail beside the corpses of the king and queen consort and beg for their forgiveness.

Thus Elizabeth's rampage continued for three whole days, during which three more countries suffered damage beyond the point of recovery.

It was only on the night after everything was over that Milia was able to catch up with Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was crying while gazing at the countries that she had destroyed.

"So that this mistake would never be repeated, so that I would never be revived, please scatter my ashes in the sea....."

After leaving behind those words, she impaled her own heart with a sword.

With that, she was supposed to have turned to ash.

However, she did not. The sword had missed her vitals by the tiniest bit.

She stopped breathing, and her heart stopped beating.

It was exactly as if she was dead.

Yet, she still lived.

The moment human blood touches her lips, life would surely be breathed into her once more.

On the other hand, by just pushing the sword a tiny bit in the right direction, she would surely turn to ash.

Milia could not bring herself to do either.

Unable to disobey her master's will, yet also unable to kill her master with her own hands. So she hid her master in a coffin so that she may sleep for eternity, and swore to stand guard for that same eternity.



“It was a foolish decision. Having abstained from blood, I did not have the strength to uphold my oath. Crimson managed to wrest Elizabeth-sama away, and is now trying to use her again. I must make up for the mistake I made a thousand years ago. If Elizabeth-sama is made to rampage again, I wouldn't know how I can ever apologize to her.....”

Milia smiles sorrowfully.

“This is everything about me. I'm sorry for keeping it a secret from you.....”

“It's fine, I am the same. My secret is that I might have demon possession. Long ago, a black bruise suddenly appeared on my back, and it grew larger and larger. But one day, it rapidly began to shrink, until it disappeared completely like it was a bad dream. If that was truly demon possession, then I will eventually..... That's why, before I leave for good, I forced my younger brother to accompany me here, so that he can earn the qualification to join a knight order. But he got kidnapped the moment I took my eyes off him..... If anything actually happens to Sid, I wouldn't know how I can ever apologize to him either.....”

“So that's what it was.....”

The two share the silence for a while.

“Um..... I don't think the Land of Peace was an illusion. There is also no guarantee that a mistake would be repeated just because it happened once. How about trying to talk with Elizabeth one more time?”

But Milia shakes her head.

“I no longer wish to disobey my master's command.”

“Then I'll do it. I just have to abduct her and wait for the end of the Red Moon. Then she won't rampage, right?”

“Likely so, yes.....”

“Then after the Red Moon is over, I'll wake her up with my blood. Then I'll have a talk with her. Surely something would change from that. And it'll all be done by me arbitrarily, so you won't be implicated.”

“But..... I don't want Elizabeth-sama to suffer anymore sadness.....”

Milia is looking down while considering. Surely various conflicts are clashing inside her mind.

“Just once more. Just one last talk. It's too tragic for things to end this way. For Milia, for Elizabeth, and also for everyone who died.....”

Claire peers into Milia's eyes and smiles.

There is hesitation in Milia's eyes. Even she herself does not want things to end this way.

But it's terrifying.

The possibility for the same mistake from before to be repeated is terrifying. The possibility of making Elizabeth go through even more sadness is terrifying.

“The Land of Peace that you two strove for was no illusion. That is what I believe. So let's give this an ending where everyone is laughing together.”

“I’m sorry..... I will impose on you then.”

Milia raises her face and nods.

“Don’t worry about it. As I said, it’ll just be something I’m doing on my own accord.”

“Also..... I apologize for saying mean things to you earlier, about how demon possession can never be healed. There’s a secret village of vampires founded by some old friends of mine. I’ll help you ask them if they know anything.”

“It didn’t bother me at all. And thanks. So then, let’s sock Crimon a punch and kidnap the sleeping queen.”

“*Un*. We will also definitely save Claire’s younger brother.”

“I’ll be the one to save Sid. Don’t you dare steal my role.”

“Ah, *un*.....”

“But do support me in my beautiful and gallant rescue drama.”

“.....You got it.”

Then the two resume climbing up the tower.

Chapter 105

The Man Who Was Too Early

There's the treasure room of a progenitor vampire for you.

It's so literally buried in treasure that I am quivering with sheer emotion.

But when I sift through the piles, going 'ooh this is good,' 'ooh this is also good,' I realize that I am extremely limited in what I can bring back.

I basically have zero ability to fence off works of art, so those I will have to pass. Unfortunately, the majority of what's here falls under that category.

Next is jewels and precious metals. Small pieces are fine, but bigger ones are bulky. And I can't fence those either.

Thus, my target has been narrowed to a single option.

The one that is surest and most efficient at adding to my own funds, the one that I most need to grab — is gold coins.

One piece the size of a ¥500 coin is worth 100k Zeny. What's more, I can use it as is.

It is the option that boasts overwhelming efficiency and reliability in comparison to all others.

What a downer of a fact to be enlightened to while looking at all this treasure up close.

"Well, that's reality for you, I suppose....."

I mutter under my breath as if to say farewell to the massive variety of treasure before me. Then I apply myself to the task of gathering gold coins.

Naturally, I've already given thought to how I will carry it all.

Drawing reference from the forefront authority on slime bodysuits, Epsilon, I have

decided to stuff the gold coins into my bodysuit.

Just as Epsilon stuffs hers with slimes, I shall stuff mine with gold coins.

Within my bodysuit, my longcoat, and even my hood, I line all available space with gold coins, leaving no patch uncovered.

Nah, that's a lie. I do still have the presence of mind to keep the joint areas unlined.

Even so, the final amount that I am able to stuff is slightly above 1,000 pieces.

A thousand pieces of gold coins, which calculates to 100 million Zeny. I don't think my math is mistaken.

I intend to live for 300 years, so it's far from enough.

However, stuffing anymore would introduce unavoidable risk.

My magic is sufficient to offset the weight of a thousand gold coins, but it's just hard to move comfortably. Any more than this, my movements would become all stiff

Also, a thousand gold coins is still not that conspicuous appearance-wise. But if I go for, say, 2,000, then that would be quite obvious indeed.

"It'd be fine if I'm simply carrying them, but....."

The boss battle with the Queen of Blood still lies ahead of me.

Apparently the Queen of Blood is a progenitor vampire.

She'll definitely be strong, no doubt about it.

A vampire who is a *progenitor*, now that's got to be strong for sure.

Thus, this time's battle plan has already been decided.

Up to now, I've always gone with appearing last. But this time, the opponent is one with a title like 'progenitor vampire,' so I've decided to be the one who appears first.

Then in the middle of my fight with the progenitor vampire, the protagonist can

appear and go “What is with this terrifyingly high level battle?! I can’t follow along at all!!” in shock.

That is the best way for this time to play out.

And so, by necessity, I need to be the first to find the Queen of Blood. The more I dally, the higher the possibility someone else beats me to it.

For now, I place the gold coins by the door of the treasure room.

“Let’s come get it afterwards.”

So that it would be quick and easy to retrieve when the event ends, or in case anything unexpected occurs.

After uttering a short prayer that I would be able to safely retrieve it, I rush to the top of the tower with the full speed dash that I haven’t done for quite a while. Being early is always better than being late.



“Finally this moment has arrived.....”

So murmurs Crimson with a crazed smile on his face.

The sacrifice has been prepared, and the moon is stained deep crimson.

The moment to revive Elizabeth the Queen of Blood has arrived.

Crimson places a hand on the large coffin enshrined in the middle of the room, then slowly pushes its lid off.

With that, the inside of the coffin is revealed.

However, the only thing there is a black, dried-up mass. The figure of Elizabeth the Queen of Blood is nowhere to be seen.

Crimson carefully cups the black mass in his hands and lifts it up reverently.

“It has been too long, oh my Queen of Blood..... The preparations to steep the world

in blood are all in order.....”

A closer look would reveal the black mass to be an organ.

It is a dried-up heart.

After the passage of a thousand years, all that is left is the heart of a progenitor.

However, as long as the heart is intact, revival is possible. That is just how progenitors are.

Crimson closes the lid of the coffin, then brings the heart towards the black-haired man lying on the floor who is to be the sacrifice.

The sacrifice’s heart has already been gouged out in advance by Crimson. It is into that gaping hole that Crimson inserts the heart of the Queen of Blood.

The flesh and blood are both fresh. With this, the most powerful progenitor vampire in all history, the Queen of Blood, will revive in all her glory to plunge the world into terror once more.

“Kukukukuku.....”

The revival process will need a bit more time.

In that time, Crimson must get away from this place. Immediately after reviving, the Queen of Blood will be starved for blood and thus will indiscriminately attack even vampires. Until she calms down, even Crimson would not be safe around her.

Walking quickly, Crimson opens the door and steps out.

But after a few steps, he stops abruptly.

“Wh-, who are you.....”

There was no presence in the hallway outside the room. At the very least, there was no one there when he opened the door.

However, all of a sudden, he notices a man in a jet-black longcoat.

On full guard against this unfamiliar man, Crimson extends his claws and readies himself for battle.

“Begone from this place! Lest you di— *buhyu?!?*”

Crimson’s body splits in two.

From the crown of his head to his crotch, in one stroke. It was so fast that Crimson could not see it at all.

However, Crimson is a high class vampire. Mere bisection is something that he can easily recover from.

“Identify yourself, you fiend! How dare you use such a lowly blade to— *biyah?!?*”

Even as he is speaking, his head is lopped off.

“H-, how dare you!! Do you actually think you stand a ch— *pugero?!?*”

Both his arms are sent flying.

“You fool! Under the Red Moon, we vampires are th— *pigyah?!?*”

Both his legs are lopped off, then diced up for good measure. Then his torso is carved up into slices.

“Wh-, what?! My regeneration can’t kee— *bufuoh?!?*”

The part that regenerated just now is summarily cut off and diced.

“W-, wait! Wait a second!! W-, we can talk about th— *guhyah?!?*”

Then he is decapitated once more, this time with the head properly diced up.

And lastly, one final stab into the only part left — his heart.

Crimson turns to ash.

The man in a jet-black longcoat indifferently proceeds into the room, stopping before the large coffin.

“Mine name is Shadow. He who lurks in shadows, he who hunts shadows.....”

Then he waits a while.

He waits.

He waits.....

“Oh Queen of Blood, I know you are there.....”

Then he waits.

He waits.....!!

“.....You *are* there, right? I don't feel a presence, but that's just because you're concealing it, right?”

Then Shadow finally opens the coffin and peeks inside.

It is empty.

“Eh? Seriously? This plot development?”

He looks around the room, and notices the corpse of a black-haired young man lying at the side with a hole in his chest.

“Don't tell me you're the Queen? Wait, no, that can't be. You're a guy, and you're dead too.....”

Then he tilts his head and looks toward the pile of ash at the door.

“Was *that* one the Queen? I do remember red hair..... but come on, he was a guy, that can't be right. But he did have the air of a boss..... eh, but he was a bit too weak to be one.....”

He mulls for a while.

“To think that I would get the rare case of the Queen being absent..... so she either never existed in the first place, she has already been killed, or she has stepped out for a bit..... Guess I'll just go retrieve the gold coins first and search around

afterwards.....”

Then he turns his heels and leaves the room.

“Haa..... could it be that I was too late..... I did rush like heck though..... seriously, man.....”

So murmuring, his figure disappears.

The Red Moon illuminates the empty room with a fantastical light.

Abruptly, the sacrifice’s body jerks.

Then *dokun, dokun.*

The heart planted inside the sacrifice begins beating.

Chapter 106

What Do YOU Understand About This Pain?!

(Blood Pressure)

Milia and Claire reach the top of the Red Tower and push the door open.

“SID!”

Spotting the corpse of a black-haired young man lying on the ground with blood flowing from his chest, Claire dashes over.

Then she embraces him without a second look. Tears burst from her reddened eyes.

“This can’t be! I’m begging you, open your eyes!! Sid!? Sid?..... *Nn?*”

Claire suddenly calms down and takes one good look at the corpse.

Her tears stop.

“This isn’t Sid.”

“Eh? He’s not?”

“Where’s Sid? Is he safe?”

Claire looks around restlessly.

That moment, Milia screams out.

“—CLAIRE!!”

“.....Eh?”

It happened much too fast.

When Claire looks down, she suddenly realizes that the young man’s arm is protruding

from her abdomen.

Blood bubbles out from Claire's mouth.

"Goho..... what..... is this..... Sid....."

"CLAIRE!!"

Claire crumples to the ground.

Then the young man who has blood flowing out from his chest moves.

There was no mistake; he had indeed been dead.

However, right now he is getting up on his own two feet, and red tentacle-like protuberances are coming out from his chest.

The tentacles squirm revoltingly while extending to envelope his entire body.

"Ahh..... this can't be..... don't tell me....."

Milia recognizes that presence.

The red tentacles eventually envelope his body in its entirety, then bursts away.

And then.

From within the dancing sprays of blood, a beautiful, naked woman appears.

Crimson hair and similarly colored eyes. Pure white skin and perfect proportions for a female body. That figure matches exactly with the memory of Elizabeth the Queen of Blood within Milia's mind.

Elizabeth clutches Claire, who still has a hole in her abdomen, and bites into her neck.

"u, aa....."

Sound falls from Claire's mouth.

She appears to be unconscious, but she is still alive.

However, Milia can do nothing but watch Claire being drained of blood.

Because Milia understands.

It is carved into her very instinct.

She understands that before the revived Elizabeth, anything she does would be a mere exercise in futility.

“Claire..... aa.....”

Then the Claire who has turned deathly pale from loss of blood is casually tossed aside.

Elizabeth’s beautiful eyes settle on Milia. Those eyes are not registering Milia as anything other than food.

“a..... Elizabeth-sama.....”

Milia backs away while quivering.

Her master has been revived.

There exists no method to stop Elizabeth, the greatest progenitor who ever lived.

This time, too, she did not make it in time.

The tragedy from a thousand years ago is going to be repeated.

Tears well up in Milia’s eyes.

But the sorrow in her eyes is overwritten by astonishment the next instant.

The black figure who suddenly appeared crashes into Elizabeth.

Elizabeth’s red claws are met by a jet-black blade.

It is the woman in a jet-black bodysuit that Milia had met down in the archive —— Beta.

“Secure her!!”

In response to her shout, three more black figures appear and extract Claire.

Beta receives one more swing from Elizabeth's claws with her jet-black blade, then jumps back to take her distance.

"665, status?"

"Still breathing. But in need of immediate medical attention."

"Noted. But..... I don't think she'll let us go just like this."

In the direction of Beta's gaze, a naked woman is walking forward.

"You all, support me."

"Yes, ma'am."

"The Vampire Hunter-san over there, we'll be leaving Clare in your care for a while."

"a..... Claire....."

Milia accepts Claire's body from 665 and embraces it.

"You can't, wait....."

Right before Beta is about to engage with Elizabeth, Milia calls her back.

She must be warned.

"It's impossible..... Elizabeth-sama is, no one can win against her....."

Beta's cat-like eyes gaze back at Milia from behind her mask.

"I wonder about that....."

Then she brings her jet-black blade up in readiness, and faces off against Elizabeth.



How did things turn out like this.

Beta fiercely laments her failure while facing off against Elizabeth the Queen of Blood.

The very fact of having allowed her master's sister to be on the verge of death cannot be called anything else other than a failure.

Her master still has yet to make his appearance. That surely means that there is currently something else that he must prioritize, and that he has entrusted this place to her.

However, Beta had realized it too late.

And that has led to the worst outcome possible.

If her master's sister loses her life, then Beta would never be able to face her master again.

“Against the Queen of Blood, how far can I go.....”

But despite her mutter, there is nothing but killing intent in her eyes.

There is only one way to redeem herself. The opponent is powerful, but she must do it.

Beta imbues her jet-black sword with magic with incredible force. Then she taps the floor with her toes twice in signal.

Her three subordinates disperse.

Ready to move at any instant.

Beta sizes up the Queen of Blood, waiting for the right timing.

The Queen of Blood approaches at a slow walk. Her completely bared body that has on not even a thread is stained by the light of the Red Moon. With unreadable eyes that seem somewhat sleepy, she sizes up Beta and the rest.

Then she enters striking distance.

“—*Shi!!*”

The flash from Beta turns into the start signal.

That breathtakingly beautiful and fast jet-black blade is stopped by the Queen of Blood's outstretched right claw.

At the same time, her left claw sweeps forward in counterattack.

However, she is attacked from behind by 666.

She has no choice but to redirect her left claw towards her back in defense.

But that very instant, 664 and 665's attacks are already homing in, and Beta has already shifted into a follow up attack.

The Queen of Blood gazes at the three blades bearing down upon her with somewhat sleepy-looking eyes — then opts to only protect her heart.

The beautiful body of the Queen of Blood is gouged by three blades.

“I-, it doesn't come out!?”

The cry is 664's.

The three blades are stuck, buried in the Queen of Blood's naked body.

The Queen of Blood had received the attacks with her muscles — then sealed their movements.

“*Ku!!*”

Beta strengthens her entire body, then yanks hers back out forcibly.

Unfortunately, 664 and 665 do not have such strength.

“Change the shape of your sword!”

So Beta barks, but it's too late.

The claws of the Queen of Blood close in on the two of them.

Beta leaps into motion. But it is 666 who is faster.

Using her beautiful swordsmanship, 666 severs the Queen of Blood's tendons.

The Queen of Blood loses power in her two arms. She regenerates in an instant, but that's enough time for 664 and 665 to alter the shape of their slime swords and pull them free.

Then Beta's slash tears into the Queen of Blood's face, 664's tears into her flank, 665's tears into the tendons of her leg, then finally 666's tears into her back and sends her flying.

The Queen of Blood's naked body crashes into the far wall.

"Well done, 666."

666 briefly lowers her head.

The Queen of Blood shows no sign of moving from underneath the debris. Beta and the rest keep their guard up vigilantly while slowly backing off.

At the very first glance, Beta had determined the Queen of Blood to be a formidable enemy. She felt with her skin the difference in their very level of existence.

Most likely, she would not stand a chance one-on-one. Even when fighting together with her 3 subordinates, it would still be tough. That's what she had thought.

In fact, the Queen of Blood is a formidable enemy, and Beta knows that it's not over yet.

However, the fight is significantly easier than she had expected.

The teamwork between the new recruits is much smoother than she had expected. Furthermore, 666's battle prowess is a head above all the other recruits. 664 calls the shots, 665 offers her knowledge and intelligence, and 666 brings her battle strength to bear. Just as Lambda said, this is indeed a good team.

“We might actually win.....”

So murmurs Beta unconsciously.

However.

“It’s impossible..... you all are indeed strong. However, the power that submerged the world in fear during the Red Moon was not merely on this level..... It’s only because Elizabeth-sama has just woken up.....”

Milia responds to Beta’s murmur from behind.

Even while embracing Claire, tears of despair are welling up in Milia’s eyes.

“Elizabeth-sama has always..... had extremely low blood pressure.....!”

“Eh?”

That instant, the Queen of Blood’s magic surges explosively, sending out an incredible shockwave.

Chapter 107

Her Duty

When she emerges from the rubble, the Queen of Blood is clad in a red dress.

No, that's wrong.

What she is clad in is blood in the form of a dress.

She is manipulating the blood to act as a dress to cover her nakedness. Above her skin, the dress of blood ripples bewitchingly as if it has a life of its own.

The overwhelming pressure emanating from the Queen of Blood causes Beta to grimace underneath her mask.

“So this is the Queen of Blood.....”

A true to life monster.

“Beta-sama.....”

664 looks at Beta as if awaiting her decision.

Beta shakes her head.

The possibility of escape is extremely low. And in the first place, abandoning their master's sister is not an option.

There is no choice but to fight.

But, that instant.

“My, oh my, what a monster..... May I join in?”

A fox beastkin with nine tails appears. Her silvery white hair flutters as she opens up two metal-ribbed fans.

“You are..... Yukime the Enchantress.....”

It is her first time seeing her in person, but Beta knows of the monarchs of Outlaw City.

Beta’s and Yukime’s eyes meet, as if they are silently confirming something with each other.

“I would be grateful for your aid.” (Beta)

That was Beta’s decision.

“Then join hands we shall.” (Yukime)

They both turn towards the Queen of Blood.

But then an intruder barges in.

“Don’t fucking start without me.”

The window glass is shattered, then a hulking man with tanned skin jumps in. He rests his giant nata on his shoulders and snorts as he directs his gaze towards the Queen of Blood.

“So you’re the bigshot here? You sure went and did a number on my city.” (Juggernaut)

“Where do you think you just came from?” (Yukime)

“Where I come from is my freedom, old hag. I will be the one to end this bitch.”

“Do as you please, then.” (Yukime)

Beta also knows of him. He is another monarch of Outlaw City, Juggernaut the Tyrant.

This moment, all three monarchs of Outlaw City have been gathered. Every single one of them is powerful enough to carve out a portion of the city for themselves. And two of them have joined hands against the Queen of Blood.

Beta feels relieved at this fortuitous turn. With this, they might still have a chance at winning.

“Eat this!!”

It is Juggernaut who rushes forward to claim first blood.

He closes the distance with his beast-like movements, then swings down his prided giant nata.

The Queen of Blood does not even flinch.

“What?!”

The giant nata tears into the Queen of Blood, but it is Juggernaut who raises his voice in astonishment.

Without any resistance, his giant nata passes straight through the Queen of Blood.

“Mistify?!”

The ability to turn their own body into mist that only high class vampires can use.

However, the Queen of Blood had used it without any telltale signs whatsoever. Furthermore, she had applied it only to the areas in the trajectory of the giant nata.

“SO ANNOYING!!”

Juggernaut unleashes another mowing attack with his giant nata.

However, the Queen of Blood once again receives it without moving a muscle. For an instant, her neck blurs, during which the giant nata passes through harmlessly.

Then the Queen of Blood gathers blood in her left hand.

A frightening amount of magic is also being infused into the growing mass.

“That’s a bad one!”

“Evade!!”

Yukime and Beta both shout out, prompting everyone to take evasive maneuvers.

The Queen of Blood tosses the mass into the air, immediately after which it explodes.

The clump of blood explodes, sending blood splashing everywhere. But in a split second, the flying drops change shape and turn into a hail of arrowheads.

The blood arrowheads staining the space red are packed so densely as to be absolutely unavoidable.

“Kuh!!”

Beta promptly decides to give up on evasion, instead rushing over to stand in front of Claire.

By strengthening the defense to her vital areas with her bodysuit and using her jet-black blade to parry away as many arrowheads as she can, she offers her own body as a shield.

Her cheeks are lacerated, and there are arrowheads buried into her arms and thighs.

Eventually, the rain of arrowheads stop.

Aside from minor scratches, Milia and Claire did not suffer any serious wounds due to the arrowheads.

However, the damage that Beta took was quite significant.

“Y-, you.....”

Seeing Beta’s figure, Milia becomes at a loss for words.

Her jet-black bodysuit is miserably torn up in countless places, revealing her white skin and red flesh. There are even several arrowheads lodged into her arms and legs.

“Not a problem. I protected my vitals.”

But Beta just calmly brings her sword back up while assessing her surroundings.

Unfortunately, not everyone is still as battle-ready as Beta is.

664 is wounded all over, and is bleeding profusely from a deep gash on her abdomen.

665 is similarly wounded all over, and her feet seem to have been done in.

666 also has conspicuous wounds, but appears not to have suffered anything major.

Yukime also suffered a few wounds, but nothing serious.

As for Juggernaut, the one who had been the closest to the center of the explosion.....

“That fucking hurts.....”

He is covered head to foot with blood.

There are arrowheads pierced into every part of his body, and the bleeding has stained his tanned skin red.

Even so, he is standing on his feet, with his giant nata resting on his shoulder.

The chips on his giant nata are also very conspicuous. It seems that he had used his giant nata to protect his vitals.

“Shit..... what a fucking monster.....” (Juggernaut)

However, he quickly falls to one knee.

“Red Moon’..... I remember now. But to think that the Queen of Blood is the infamous progenitor vampire from the legends.....!” (Yukime)

Yukime is gazing at the Queen of Blood with shock.

“What’s that?” (Juggernaut)

“From long in the past..... there is a legend of a vampire who destroyed several countries within a mere three days.” (Yukime)

“Entire countries..... in three days.....?” (Juggernaut)

Juggernaut grimaces while turning to look up at the Queen of Blood.

There is not a single person present who doubts that the Queen of Blood is the one from the legend.

“664, 665, fall back.” (Beta)

Beta withdraws the two who are no longer capable of doing battle.

“666, you too.” (Beta)

“I can still fight!” (666)

“You have something else that you need to do, right?” (Beta)

“.....Eh?” (666)

Beta smiles underneath her mask, then steps forward.

She has already given up trying to win.

The Queen of Blood is a monster that Beta herself is no match for. No matter how much she struggles, even if all of them throw themselves at her, the chance for victory is nil.

However, they don't need to win.

Even if Beta cannot win, her master surely can. She holds absolute faith in her master.

That's why all Beta has to do is buy time until her master arrives.

That is the final duty left to her.

Chapter 108

Overwhelmingly Terrible at Explanations

Beta pours magic into her jet-black blade as she faces off against the Queen of Blood.

“Eh?!”

That instant, Beta’s flow of magic suddenly becomes turbulent. Beta lowers the output in an attempt to bring it back under control, but the rampaging magic shows no sign of calming down.

“*Kuh!*”

“Beta-sama?!”

A much loathed yet familiar pain runs throughout her body.

Starting from the wounds made by the blood arrowheads, her skin is turning black.

This..... is the symptom of demon possession.

Upon understanding what’s going on, Beta immediately changes the way she controls her magic. The turbulence alleviates a little, but her magic still remains very difficult to control.

Then the Queen of Blood moves.

She begins gathering an even larger mass of blood above her head, imbuing it with enough magic to make the very air quake.

“That’s... just.....”

Beta’s voice trembles before the mass of blood that is clearly much larger than the previous one. Right now, she is in no state to move.

Furthermore, a cry rises up from behind her.

“Claire?! Hold yourself together!”

Turning around, Beta sees a wound on Claire’s body also turning black.

The situation is beyond salvation.

The mass of blood in midair is being compressed, threatening to explode at any moment now.

“My lord, forgive me.....”

Beta murmurs while on the verge of tears —— then Claire’s eyes snap open.



Claire is dreaming.

She is floating within an endless white space.

There is only Claire in that space, with nothing else to be seen.

But she can clearly hear the sound of her own heartbeat.

“.....Can you hear me?”

Hearing a voice from somewhere, Claire lifts her face.

“Can you hear my voice.....?”

This time, she hears it clearly.

Looking in the direction of the voice, she sees a black-haired woman. Her violet-colored eyes are looking straight at Claire.

“You are.....?”

“I’ve come to help you.”

“Help..... me?”

“Yes.”

Then those violet eyes shift to look at Claire’s body.

“Eh? What is this?!”

Claire’s white skin is gradually being stained black.

This is a symptom that Claire had experienced long ago.

“Don’t tell me…… demon possession?!”

“Technical, not exactly. The condition that you call ‘demon possession’ has already been long healed by him.”

“Healed? ‘Him’……?”

“You should know him very well.”

“I haven’t a clue. Who is ‘he’?”

However, the woman with violet eyes only smiles mysteriously.

“Your body will soon rot away. That’s why I’ll lend you my strength for a while.”

“Wait a second!? I have no idea what’s going on!”

“I’m really bad at explaining things.”

“Please, tell me. What is happening to my body?!”

“Let me think, how can I explain it best…… unfortunately, you are compatible and thus have lost control.”

“Sorry, I didn’t get any of that.”

“It might get a bit long, but we don’t have much time. So I’ll keep it concise.”

“Yes please.”

“Do you know what ‘evolution’ is? Long ago, someone from the same research lab as me looked into it, and apparently all humans are descended from apes. According to her hypothesis, apes became adapted to their environment for a long period of time, gradually turning into humans over the passage of time. I thought it a very interesting idea. I don’t know if it’s true or not, though.”

“Umm..... Is that related?”

“Sure it is. But you see, another researcher disagreed with the claim that humans adapt to their surroundings. But she was not refuting that humans are descended from apes. There are smart apes and stupid apes. Within harsh conditions, only the smart apes survive to reproduce and increase the population. Eventually, there are only smart apes left, and they turn into humans over the passage of time.”

“Er, what’s the difference? More like, what are you even talking about?”

“It’s totally different. In other words, the apes survived only because they happened to be compatible with their environment, they did not adapt by their own will.”

“I..... guess.....?”

“And so..... umm, what was I talking about in the first place?”

“About me..... I think?”

“Right, right, about adaptation and compatibility.”

“.....Eh?”

“In short, it’s the ones who adapted to their environment and changed shape that survived. It is because of adaptation that right now, even in this very moment, blood is evolving into two different kinds. The original kind causes such a heavy burden on the body that it becomes incapable of reproduction. The second kind, its divergence is clear to see from its characteristics. But right now, both are present inside of you, trying to adapt to each other. Adapting to each other is really hard to do, but you unfortunately happen to be compatible, and you also unfortunately do not know the way to control them. That is why your blood is rampaging within you and tearing your body apart — ah, we’re out of time.”

“Wha-, wait, we’re at the most important part now! Eh, OW!?”

A sharp pain suddenly stabs into Claire's hand. She turns it over to see a complicated magic circle engraved on the back.

"That mark will surely teach you how to control them."

"Ah, it's gone."

The black bruise on her body has disappeared.

"There's no more time. Things are taking a serious turn for the worse outside."

"There really was no need for the first half of the explanation, right?"

"I'm going to borrow your body for a bit. I won't be able to use my full strength, but....."

With that, the woman with violet eyes begins to fade away.

"Wait! What is your name?!"

"I am Aurora....."

"Aurora..... why are you helping me?"

"Because you, are his —....."

However, Aurora has completely disappeared, taking with her the final half of her sentence.

"What was that, seriously. 'His'..... what? Is it the same guy who healed my demon possession? She didn't tell me any of the most important parts....."

Claire is left muttering to herself in the white space.



Within Milia's arms, Claire's eyes suddenly snap open.

Within those eyes, her pupils — have been dyed a beautiful violet.

Chapter 109

The Queen of Blood

Claire suddenly stands up from within Milia's arms. Noticing her violet eyes, Milia lets out a soft gasp.

"Claire, the color of your eyes....."

The change is not limited to the color of her eyes. Her aura seems more mature, and even the quality of her magic seems different somehow.

But above all else, the most conspicuous thing..... is that all her wounds have closed up.

Her abdomen is stained with the blood from the large wound just now, but that blood begins to wriggle before clumping together and floating in midair.

It is exactly what the Queen of Blood is doing.

"Well then, I wonder how long — can last....."

So murmurs Claire. That voice is quiet and composed. Even the way she speaks seems to have become that of an entirely different person.

"Are you really Claire.....?"

But right after Milia voices her question, the Queen of Blood's clump of blood explodes.

The sprays of blood once again turn into arrowheads, then fall upon everyone with unavoidable speed and density.

All of them merely stand in place, capable only of watching in despair.

That is..... with *her* being the sole exception.

"Unfortunately for you, I am the original....."

So muttering, Claire sets off her own clump of blood.

That clump of blood splits into tiny, tiny drops that disperse. It almost becomes a mist of blood.

The drops adhere to the arrowheads upon making contact.

“Eh?”

Milia is the only person who voices her astonishment. But everyone else present is equally shocked.

The blood arrowheads suddenly lose momentum, falling to the ground as if drained of energy.

“It is not difficult to steal away control over blood that has left the body. It seems that I wasn’t able to completely wrest control, but.....”

Claire smiles bewitchingly while looking at the Queen of Blood, who is currently pierced by several blood arrowheads.

Claire had used the mist to hijack control over the arrowheads, then even sent them back. However, it was only with a limited number that she was able to go so far. The others she could only drop.

However, the ability to do such a thing is clearly beyond the realm of a human.

Everyone is left dumbfounded at the sight of what seems to have developed into a fight between two Queens of Blood.

“You cannot hope to defeat me with projectiles. In other words, there is only one thing that you can do.”

Claire runs her tongue over her lips, causing them to be dyed blood red.

The Queen of Blood moves.

She regenerates the areas wounded by arrowheads, and changes the shape of her dress.

From her dress of blood emerges..... tentacles of blood.

Within the blink of an eye, she adds to their numbers.

“Yes, that is the right answer.....”

So Claire murmurs, before extending tentacles of blood from her own body. It is exactly what the Queen of Blood is doing.

Red tentacles spread out from both of them, seemingly trying to intimidate the tentacles of the other.

Then both sides initiate battle simultaneously.

Sharp tips like the point of a spear stabs straight towards the other.

Some tentacles dive underground, some thrust through the ceiling to go overhead, and the rest almost paint the entire space blood red in their attempts to attack the other from all directions.

While tentacles crush tentacles, it takes but a brief while to reach their respective targets.

Looking at the incoming tentacles, Claire lifts a giant red scythe in readiness, while the Queen of Blood extends her red claws.

Then they both begin slashing at each other.

Tentacles dance, are crushed, are ripped apart, and dye the air with fresh red. The light from the Red Moon shines in through the holes punched into the ceiling, illuminating the two ladies in breathtaking beauty.

The fight being played out is too fast for eyes, too incredible for belief, and so utterly beyond human boundaries.

No one can take their eyes off this ferocious yet entrancing fight.

“How incredible.....”

“What a fight this is.....”

Are the two perhaps of equal strength?

Observers would not be able to determine who is holding the advantage.

All that can be determined is that not a single decisive hit has landed yet.

After the maddened dance of the tentacles continues for a while, Claire heaves a sigh.

“This isn’t getting us anywhere……. But is it already enough?”

Then a roguish smile comes over her face.

“Have you already……. breathed in enough of the blood mist?”

The next instant, the Queen of Blood falls to her knees.

She vomits blood, then blood pours out from her eyes. Then blood spurts out from every single orifice on her body.

“*Goho…….*”

For the first time, the Queen of Blood groans in pain.

“If you’re going to breathe it, you have to properly steal back control over it.”

Claire’s tentacles rush towards the kneeling Queen of Blood.

The Queen of Blood’s tentacles make an attempt at warding them off, but merely get crushed by the overwhelming difference in quantity.

Enough tentacles to fill one’s vision envelopes the Queen of Blood —— then a huge amount of blood scatters everywhere.

All that is left is red blood.

“It’s still far from my best, but I suppose this would have to do.”

That mature air, mysterious smile, inhuman battle strength, and violet eyes.

The Claire standing there with arms crossed is completely different from the teenage

girl that Milia knows.

“Claire, what has happened to you.....?”

Claire briefly glances at Milia, then smiles a slightly troubled smile. That smile seems to have Claire’s shadow in there somewhere.

However, the next instant, vigilance returns to those violet eyes.

The entire place is enshrouded in thick blood. Eventually, it gathers, and forms a humanoid shape.

“She’s here.....”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.....”

“She’s still alive.....?”

Amidst the cries of shock, Milia is the only one who looks somewhat understanding. The Elizabeth that she knew would not be finished this easily.

Despite that, the color of despair has already receded from Milia’s eyes.

Because *she* is here.

She, who is like Claire, yet is not Claire, is here, standing in opposition against Elizabeth.

As long as *she* is here, the mistake from a thousand years ago would not repeat.

She is the hope that she now clings to.

However, the moment the Queen of Blood emerges unscathed from the mist of blood, Claire’s body wobbles.

Then she falls to her knees.

“As I’d thought, this body has already reached its limit.....”

She appears to be in pain, and blood is dribbling down from the corner of her mouth.

It appears that Claire's body could not withstand that power beyond human limits.

Claire is kneeling, with the Queen of Blood looking down on her. The scene has become the exact opposite of that from mere moments ago.

"Oi oi, are you fucking kidding me....."

"We might be in trouble now....."

"How can this....."

Milia's eyes shake.

If Claire goes down here, there would no longer be anyone to stop Elizabeth.

The tragedy from a thousand years ago would play out once more. Then, after everything is over, her master would once again fall into despair and weep.....

She cannot allow that to happen again.

And furthermore, she does not want to once again lose a friend that she holds dear.

"Claire!"

Milia rushes towards Claire.

"I'll fight too!"

She draws her sword and faces towards the Queen of Blood.

"You....."

"Even though the color of your eyes has changed, you are still you, right.....?"

"I'm just borrowing her body for a bit. Claire is still Claire."

"Then you are also an important friend of mine."

A thousand years ago, Milia had already half given up. It was because she knew Elizabeth's strength that she understood how incapable she is of stopping her.

But..... if she hadn't given up, perhaps something might have been different.

Just as Claire became able to stand up against Elizabeth, perhaps something might have happened to Milia herself.

If she did not give up, a miracle might have happened.

That is why Milia now raises her sword.

Believing with her heart that something will happen.

That is also what everyone else is praying for.

For someone to come stop the Queen of Blood.....

"There is no need for you to fight....."

Claire reaches out to press down on Milia's sword hand.

"I have fulfilled my role. All I was trying to do is buy time until *he* arrives....."

Claire flashes a beautiful smile.

"He'.....?"

"Yes. And *he* has arrived....."

Then —— a jet-black shadow descends.

"Mine name is Shadow. I am he who lurks in shadows, he who hunts shadows....."

Upon beholding him, Claire lets go of her consciousness in reassurance and relief.

Chapter 110

Her Master

The shadow that has descended before Beta and the rest flutters his longcoat and unsheathes his jet-black sword.

“You are——!” (Juggernaut)

“You are——!” (Yukime)

“——Shadow-sama!”

Beta quivers with delight.

Up to date, her master has utterly wiped the ground with every single opponent he faced, no matter how powerful they might have been. Ever since she and the rest were weak and young, their master had been fighting in front of them. Beta had grown up staring at that back.

That is why Beta’s faith in her master is absolute.

No matter what happens, everything would be fine if her master is present.

Due to that faith and reassurance, or possibly due to not having seen her master for a significant while, her master’s figure seems a notch bigger in Beta’s eyes.

However, not everyone looks at Shadow in the way Beta does.

“Give it up, it’s impossible even for you.” (Juggernaut)

“Shadow-han, be careful.” (Yukime)

Juggernaut’s gaze is disparaging, and Yukime’s is anxious.

The sheer disrespect!

Beta glares sharply at the two of them.

Her master can handle absolutely anything and everything.

Even while this is going on, the air between Shadow and the Queen of Blood has been growing increasingly tense.

Shadow raises his jet-black sword, and the Queen of Blood deploys her red claws.

That moment, Beta notices it.

The pressure from the Queen of Blood is still climbing.

“Does that monster have bottomless power?” (Juggernaut)

“She still wasn’t fighting at full strength just now.....?” (Yukime)

It seems that Juggernaut and Yukime have noticed it as well. The Queen of Blood has grown even more powerful than when she was fighting against Claire.

Her eyes blaze like red jewels, and the dress on her appears even fresher and wriggles even more energetically.

Shadow’s and the Queen of Blood’s tension rises further —— then tentacles of blood and jet-black blade make contact.

A countless number of tentacles assault Shadow, but Shadow cuts them all down.

Red and black traces clash repeatedly, the two’s movements being so fast that even sound cannot catch up.

However, this is but a diversion for the both of them.

Abruptly, the Queen of Blood’s figure seems to flicker, immediately after which she suddenly appears behind Shadow.

Red claws scream towards his back.

However, this time it is Shadow’s figure that flickers.

The claws swing wide, while the jet-black blade attempts to pierce the Queen of Blood's chest from behind.

Bashah!

Together with the sound of spilling water, the Queen of Blood repels that, sending blood arrowheads flying in the process.

Shadow deflects them all with his sword, then the Queen of Blood returns to her original position.

Seeing the two stand in their starting positions, it is almost as if the previous exchange was just an illusion.

“What the hell.....” (Juggernaut)

“To think that he is this skilled.....” (Yukime)

The high speed fight that no one could follow with their eyes leaves everyone in dumbfounded amazement and Beta in ecstasy.

This is her master.

However, at the same time, Beta feels a sense of wrongness that she cannot put into words. Before she can figure out what it is, the Queen of Blood moves again.

She cuts off two of her own tentacles, then uses the blood to create two clones of herself.

“This is the reason why Elizabeth-sama was called the strongest progenitor. Elizabeth-sama can create clones of herself with blood and manipulate them at will.” (Milia)

With three Queens of Blood as the opponent, the fight resumes.

The tentacles' restraining attacks are all deflected by the jet-black blade.

The same scene from before is being replayed.

However, what's different is that there are now three Queens of Blood launching surprise attacks.

She would at times appear in between tentacles, from the back, from above, from the side, assaulting Shadow again and again and again.

But Shadow still manages to skillfully evade all of the attacks.

The scene almost looks like a struggle between natural forces that would continue for all eternity.

But Beta feels the sense of wrongness growing increasingly prominent.

Whatever can it be ——

Has she ever seen her master cross swords with an opponent for such a long time?

No, she has not.

Something is wrong.

There is something off with her master.

Unease suddenly creeps into Beta's heart.

Beta stares carefully at the fight, seeking the cause of her seed of doubt.

A whole bundle of red tentacles assault Shadow, while three Queens of Blood attempt further surprise attacks.

As this is looped repeatedly, Beta finally realizes it.

Shadow is skillfully handling the attacks from the Queens of Blood with parries, but none of it flows into counterattacks afterwards.

Why does Shadow not retaliate? Or could it be that he can't?

Shadow's movements are sealed by the tentacles coming at him endlessly from all directions, such that he has entirely lose the initiative against the Queens of Blood.

How can this be happening.

The reason —— is because Shadow's legs have stopped.

The master that Beta knows would evade using the barest minimal movement and then immediately shift into counterattack. But right now, her master is only parrying the claws and tentacles with his sword. If he parries, then his counterattack would be delayed by a fraction of a beat. Within that time, the second and third Queens of Blood would attack, causing the window for counterattack to be lost.

Why——

Why do you not dodge, my lord——?

Her master's feet are heavy. His movements are stiff.

This manner of fighting, of parrying tentacles and standing his ground, is almost like —— it is as if he is protecting something very important to him.

“——?!”

That instant, Beta finally realizes it.

Behind Shadow is Beta.

Furthermore, behind Beta is the grievously wounded 664 and 665, the 666 who is protecting the two of them, and also her master's unconscious sister.....

“Ah, aaa.....”

Beta's voice is stuck in her throat.

Her master has been trying to protect them throughout the entire fight.

That which is important to him.....

Then abruptly, the equilibrium of the fight is broken.

Finally, Shadow falters.

Red tentacles push him off his balance, then all three Queens of Blood throw in their follow up attacks, sending Shadow crashing through a wall.

“Sha-, SHADOW-SAMAAAAAA——!!”

Beta ignores her body's cries of pain, desperately trying to crawl towards the collapsed wall.

"I told you so at the start, it's impossible even for you....." (Juggernaut)

"Even Shadow-han cannot do it.....?" (Yukime)

That's wrong!

If Beta and the others had not been behind him, if they had not dragged him down, then her master's strength is not just this level.

"Shadow-sama, Shadow-sama!!"

Her desperate crawling brings Beta to the collapsed wall. That moment.

Violet magic spills out from the other side.

"Wha——?!" (Juggernaut)

"What is——?!" (Yukime)

That overwhelming power causes the air to shake and debris to float up.

The light from the Red Moon is stained violet by the overflowing magic.

Then Shadow appears from beyond the wall.

"Shadow-sama!"

Beta's face is dyed with rapture.

For the master before her is finally the master that she knows.

Clad in violet magic, the figure of her master that somehow looks a notch smaller than before emanates only one word —— POWER.

He imbues his beautiful violet magic into his sword, then faces off against the Queen of Blood once more.

“It seems I have to get a little serious.....”

That voice that sounds like a reverberation from the heart of the earth sends shivers of elation down Beta’s spine.

Not a shred of unease remains.

This. Is. Her. Master.

“*Nn?*”

Suddenly something glints at the edge of her vision, so Beta peeks behind the wall.

For some reason, there is a large number of gold coins on the ground there.

Beta tilts her head in puzzlement.

Why in a place like this..... oh well.

“Shadow-sama, go for it~~~~!!”

Beta’s cheer becomes the signal for the fight to resume.

Chapter 111

Mission Complete

The air surrounding Shadow has changed.

Violet magic rages around him.

“Unreal.....”

“What an unbelievable amount of magic.....”

Kotsu, kotsu.

With his jet-black boots ringing out crisply with every step, Shadow nonchalantly approaches the Queen of Blood.

But there is no way the Queen of Blood would allow such impudence.

A dreadful number of tentacles encircle Shadow in a split second, then assault him simultaneously.

With only his sword, Shadow deflects those tentacles.

Then, *kotsu.*

He nonchalantly takes another step.

“Wha——?!”

“How can he just——?!”

How incredible that one step is, everyone present understands full well.

Then, one more step.

Kotsu.

Shadow nonchalantly steps further in.

This time, he does not even use his sword. The tentacles, in their unbelievable numbers, seem to be evading him of their own accord.

As if they are merely here to show a magic trick, the tentacles swing wide.

Shadow fully perceives the movement of every last strand of tentacle.

Then he evades using the minimal amount of movement, closing the distance one step at a time.

It is almost as if —— nay, he *is* declaring that the tentacles are not even worth his attention.

Even when a Queen of Blood appears behind him, he casually dodges as if he had already seen it coming, his gait not showing even a hint of delay.

He does not counterattack.

Because he understands the futility of doing so.

That is why he only walks on, ignoring everything.

The only thing in his eyes is the main body of the Queen of Blood.

Kotsu, kotsu, kotsu.

The sound of his boots sound frighteningly loud.

Then Shadow stops.

At the same time, the tentacles also stop.

The distance between the two is now within arm's length.

The beautiful Queen of Blood and the jet-black Shadow stare at each other for a while.

Behind the Queen of Blood is the deep crimson Red Moon. All around Shadow is his violet magic.

The entire place is seized by silence, as if the intense fight just now was but a lie.

Within the silence, the two seem to be conversing.

“You wish for release in death.....”

Like a reverberation from the depths of the earth, his voice rumbles out.

“Very well.....”

Then an incredible amount of magic begins gathering towards his jet-black sword.

The violet magic draws a spiral as it converges.

The Queen of Blood extend her claws.

Why is it so? Why do those claws that used to instill such fear now look so frail and unreliable.....

“WAIT!!”

That is why Milia jumps out.

“Elizabeth-sama is a gentle person!! I’m sure she can start all over again!!”

She dashes. Because she has promised to grasp a future where everyone can laugh together after everything is over.

That’s why——!

“PLEASE!!”

She reaches out with desperation, with everything she has, with everything she is.

Shadow looks at Milia for a fraction of a moment.

However——

Tentacle of blood throw Milia back.

“I AM.....”

His voice rings out mercilessly.

From where she has fallen on the ground, Milia’s head jerks up. The tentacles could have stabbed Milia, could have torn her apart. Despite that, Milia is unhurt.

“ELIZABETH-SAMA!!”

Milia thinks she caught Elizabeth looking her way for a split second.

Those red eyes that she glimpsed were filled with kindness, just as they had been so long ago.

“.....RECOVERY TAEPODONG!!!”

Red claw and jet-black blade clash, then the world is dyed pure violet.



“*Uu*.....”

It seems that she had lost consciousness.

When Beta wakes up, she finds a still night illuminated by the light of the Red Moon.

Everyone around her are still unconscious. Beta was apparently the first to come to.

The figure of her master is nowhere to be seen.

He has surely already departed for the next battle. How busy he is..... and how kind-hearted he is.

“Thank you so much, Shadow-sama.....”

Realizing that all her wounds have been healed, Beta naturally breaks into a smile.

Looking over, she observes that the wounds of 664, 665, and even 666 are all fully healed.

It hardly needs to be said that her master's sister and Milia are also without a scratch.

As an aside, it seems that Juggernaut and Yukime have been healed too.

"It appears that Eta's hypothesis was indeed spot on....."

Beta retrieves a sample of blood from the Queen of Blood into a small flask.

Then she focuses on her own blood that's staining her own bodysuit..... and manages to make it float.

"Could I make use of this if I train it.....? Haah, I have a sense of foreboding that I'm going to be made into a sample myself..... *ei.*"

Beta shoots off the blood under her control to wake up her subordinates.

"Ow."

"What?!"

"Where is this.....?"

"How long do you three plan on sleeping. We're going back."

"Y-, yes, ma'am!"

Upon being roused, the three get up in a fluster.

"*Kuh*..... what happened....." (Juggernaut)

"What is it that happened.....?" (Yukime)

The two from Outlaw City seem to be getting up also.

Then a quick pan around induces blank amazement.

"Wha-, don't tell me, this was done by that guy.....?!" (Juggernaut)

"Shadow-han, who *are* you....." (Yukime)

The Red Tower has been pulverized.

The two of them look up at the sky from the ground where the Red Tower once stood. As if to burn into their eyes and hearts *that man's* power and strength.....

“Alright, we’re going.”

So saying, Beta turns her heels.

“*Uun.....*”

“Elizabeth-sama?!”

That moment, Claire and Milia also wake up.

Beta shoots a quick glance behind her, and sees Milia rushing towards and embracing someone within the rubble.

“Elizabeth-sama——! Oh thank heavens..... I thought that I would never again.....”

Then, with her sobbing in the background, Beta murmurs.

“This time for sure, it would be great if you can truly find it..... a Land of Peace.....”

Then she begins melting into the night.

“With this, it’s ‘Mission Complete.’”

Leaving behind a soft giggle, Beta’s figure disappears entirely.

Chapter 112

There's No Helping It When the Left Hand Begins to Ache

Gazing at the extravagant carriage painted in black, I open my mouth in a yawn. I can't see inside because the windows are blocked by thick curtains, but apparently Nee-san is having a farewell party with her vampire friend inside.

The clear, crisp autumn air feels good.

A lot of things happened, but the real life progenitor vampire event has ended. Along the way, I met a bit of trouble due to unforeseen developments. I still managed to try out Recovery at the very last moment, so all's well that ends well.

But unfortunately, I couldn't manage to 'Recovery' all of the gold coins. At my best moment, I was on cloud 9 with 3,000 pieces. But after various things happened, I was only able to secure 500 pieces.

Five hundred gold coins means fifty million Zeny. It's far from enough to last for the rest of my life.

But after giving it more thought, I realize that this is more than enough.

After all, Outlaw City will always be here, and there are still two towers left.

If I'm ever troubled for money, I can just come here again.

Indeed, Outlaw City is my piggy bank.

After another while, the door of the carriage opens, and Nee-san comes out.

Oh, and about Nee-san? It's becomes a rather serious matter.

The incident was last night. It happened at the inn where we were staying at.

Apparently Nee-san got wrapped up in this time's vampire event because she was looking for me. That is why I thought to at least give her a word of apology, and thus opened the door to her room.

That instant, I witnessed it.

I witnessed Nee-san wrapping her left hand in bandages to cover up a super stylish magic circle on the back of said hand.

Furthermore, Nee-san was muttering "My left hand aches..... I have a special power....."

I wordlessly closed the door.

It's a triple combo of 'magic circle,' 'hiding with bandages,' and 'special power.'

So Nee-san has reached that phase of her life.....

Nee-san's smile seems somewhat shadowed after coming out from that black-painted carriage.

I call out to her with as normal a voice as I can muster.

"Done?"

"Yes. Let's go."

The two of us walk off.

But, that moment.

"Sid....."

I am suddenly hugged from the back.

".....What's the matter?"

"It's... nothing..... no, actually... it's something..... I actually....."

Here it comes.....!

“Have a special power sleeping inside of me.....”

Oh boy, it's her coming out.

I must not deny her here. Thoughtless denial leads children towards the path of delinquency.

“I knew it. I've always thought that Nee-san is special.”

“As I'd thought, Sid really believes me.....”

Nee-san hugs me even tighter.

“I must unravel the mystery related to this power. Then eventually, who 'he' is, and what it is that I am supposed to do with this power.....”

“*Un*, I'm sure Nee-san would be fine. No matter what path Nee-san goes down, I will always support you.”

“Sid.....”

From here on, Nee-san will surely encounter a large variety of hardships. She will ponder, she will suffer, and she will face reality head on. But there's no helping it, now that her left hand has begun to ache. This is the path that all humans must tread to become adults.

Regardless of what path she ultimately decides to walk on, I intend to respect her choice. After all, the path that she is on right now is the path that I myself have walked in the far past.....

Suddenly feeling a gaze on my back, I turn around a little.

In front of the black-painted carriage is a woman standing underneath a huge black parasol.

I can't see her face because it is hidden by the parasol, but I do see her beautiful crimson hair swaying in the autumn wind.

She performs an elegant bow from where she is.



Yukime the Enchantress is waiting at the top floor of the White Tower.

Together with the pale moonlight shining in from the white moon outside, candles on the table illuminate the extravagant fare on the table.

Suddenly, a black figure emerges from the dark shadows.

“So you’ve come.....”

Before she knows it, Shadow, clad in his usual jet-black longcoat, is standing on the other side of the sliding screen.

“Shadow-han, I have been expecting you.”

Then two ladies wearing kimonos with high exposure guide him in.

Shadow sits down across from Yukime.

“Your business.....?”

Then he speaks up with that deep voice that sounds like a reverberation emanating from an abyss.

“The other day, I was entirely in your care. It is all thanks to Shadow-han that I still have this life of mine.”

Yukime lowers her head briefly.

Within the collar area of her audacious kimono, two bulges can be seen jiggling.

“Would you accept my thanks? Natsu, Kana.”

Then she smiles bewitchingly.

The two beautiful women who go by the names of Natsu and Kana open up their kimonos and draw towards Shadow.

“I’ve said it already. It was not my intention to save you. And.....”

“Do you dislike things like this.....? It’s a pity, but we can leave it for after we become close, then.”

Yukime signals for Natsu and Kana to leave the room.

Then she snuggles up to him and pours him a cup of alcohol.

“This is sake of the highest quality.”

However, Shadow shows no intention of reaching out for it.

“I said for you to state your business.....”

“I just want to get closer with Shadow-han.....”

So Yukime whispers in his ear, before giggling softly.

“But it takes a while to build up a relationship. It’s not quite in exchange, but I do have a proposition to bring to you.”

Yukime presses her two bulges against him while speaking.

“Do you know of the plan to entrap Mitsugoshi Co? Trading firms feeling threatened by the abrupt rise of Mitsugoshi Co have joined hands and are planning to crush it. I myself also have healthy companies on the outside. They are actually quite sizeable too.....”

Yukime says the last few words in a meaningful way while smiling bewitchingly.

“Be it Mitsugoshi Co or the Alliance..... whichever one wins out in the end, there would still be a fierce battle for supremacy in the business world around here. At the moment, I am also part of the Alliance, but the victor will be neither Mitsugoshi Co nor the Alliance.”

Yukime’s lips draw so close to Shadow’s ears that they are on the verge of touching.

“The victor will be me, together with Shadow-han..... Join hands with me, and we shall wrest it all away.”

She blows softly, then rests her head on his shoulder.

“With just me and you, what say you to creating a giant organization to control the entire world’s business from the shadows.....?”

Shadow’s ears, which had remained unresponsive to all of Yukime’s temptation so far, twitches at this very moment.



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