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Too!

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WONDERFUL
WORLD with
BLESSINGS
EXTRA

A
TIME
IN
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LIME
LIGHT

7

THE
FOOL
WHO
WAS
LOVED
BY
DRAGONS

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Prologue

“Yeah, this isn’t going very well.”

I let out a huge sigh as I stood in front of the body of a Giant Frog.

My entire body was covered in slime, and my shoulders felt heavy.

“It wasn’t supposed to be like this.”

After getting kicked out of that country, I traveled to the town of Axel in the neighbouring country.

This place is famed as the town for newbie adventurers, so it seemed like the perfect place to begin my new life as an adventurer.

I changed classes from Dragon Knight to Warrior and sealed away my spear, making do with the single sword that Princess Leonor gifted me, but it just isn’t coming together.

“If I had a spear, I could defeat a creature of this level in a single blow.”

This wasn’t a boast. It was an objective fact.

A Dragon Knight’s main weapon is a spear. They carry swords on their waist as a backup weapon, but it has no place in an actual battle. As such, we mostly trained with our spears and rarely if ever use our swords.

“I never expected them to be this different from each other.”

Dodging enemy attacks isn’t too difficult, but when it comes to attacking, a spear and a sword are completely different. The footwork you need to use with a sword is also completely different from a spear, so it feels awkward to me.

“Guess I’ll just have to get used to it.”

I've been working by myself so far, but I've heard that adventurers generally group up into teams.

I should start looking into finding some companions before too long.

As I was thinking about that, I suddenly heard the sounds of battle in the distance.

I glanced over in that direction, and managed to make out a group of adventurers in the middle of a fight.

One vanguard with a shield up in front, and a bow user and a spell caster in the back, huh.

They seemed to be struggling a little, so I decided to lend them a hand. I've only been in town for a short period of time, but there's no harm in making a few more acquaintances.

As I rushed over, I raised my voice so that they would know that I'm not an enemy.

"Seems like you're in trouble! I'll lend you a hand!"

With my sword in hand, I gallantly leapt into the battlefield.

"Oh, thanks for the help!"

"We've been really lacking in offense. You're a great help!"

The shield bearer and the bowman gave me words of thanks. I could only see the mage like girl from the back, but she seemingly raised her staff in acknowledgement.

They were on the ropes earlier, but with just the addition of a single vanguard, the flow of the battle decidedly shifted in our favour.

"You have my gratitude. You seem to be an adventurer, but I don't think I've seen you in town before."

“Ahh, I’ve only been in town for a short time, after all.”

The straight laced seeming man thanked me after the battle was over, and I casually responded.

There are a lot of his type amongst the knights, so he is easy to talk to.

“*Sigh*, seems like it’d really be tough if Taylor is our only vanguard.”

The man with the long bangs casually shrugged his shoulders, seemingly frivolous in both words and actions. He seems quite close to the thuggish adventurer image that I’m trying to adopt.

“Good work, we managed to make it out somehow. Thank you too.”

The female mage who had her back turned towards me this entire time turned around and gave me a smile.

“Eh?”

Seeing her face took my breath away.

The face of the person who I’ve given up hope of ever seeing again is staring right at me, after all.

“Why are you gawking at me like that? Is there something you want to say about my face?”

She said with a frown. Her displeased face is also practically a clone of hers.

However, it’s not the same. They do really resemble each other very closely, but they aren’t the same person.

There’s just the very slightest bit of difference between the two of them, but I can tell.

This isn't good. Whenever I'm with her, I'm reminded of the princess. I've already decided to make a clean break from my past, so it's best if I don't get involved with her. I took a deep breath to calm myself down.

"No, sorry. My name is Dust. May I ask your name?"

"Me? I'm Lynn. Nice to meet you, warrior with a strange name."

She offered her hand to me with a smile, and I couldn't take my eyes off her.

I know I shouldn't hang out along with her, but...

"I'm working solo right now, but if you don't mind, could I join your party?"

When I looked at her face, those words just came spilling out of my mouth.

Chapter 1



THE ADVANCE OF THE DEMON KING'S ARMY



The Advance of the Demon King's Army

Part 1

I was in the guild, enjoying a drink as I waited for the rest of the adventurers to gather.

Together with my companions, we were seated at the usual spot.

Normally, when we gather at the guild like this, the table would be filled with towers of piled up plates, but today we only had salad and beer on the table.

Our resident big eater, Faitfore, was taking a nap in her room after eating her fill.

“Is what she said earlier true?”

Taylor said with a frown, crossing his arms.

“Well, you wouldn't say something like that as a joke.”

Keith said as he swirled his drink around in his mug.

“I heard some rumours about this, but I never thought it would be true. *Sigh~*.”

Lynn, the only girl in our party, let out a small sigh.

There is a reason why everyone in the guild is unusually quiet.

That’s because of the words that the guild receptionist, Luna, said just a short while ago.

She just made an emergency broadcast, and is currently waiting for everyone to gather before making an official announcement.

As I drank my drink in a daze, the adventurers in town slowly started trickling in.

Amongst them is Kazuma and his party.

Hmm? No, wait, it doesn’t seem like his entire party is here. The most cheerful out of all of them, the blue haired priest Aqua, isn’t with them. That’s rare.

The assembled guild staff seemed to be waiting for Kazuma to arrive, and started addressing the crowd the moment they popped in.

“Now, the reason we gathered everyone here is because of the rumours of the Demon King’s Army attacking this town. I’m sure everyone has already heard about it.”

The adventurers who heard this news reacted in one of two ways: either they fell completely silent, or they erupted into worried murmurs.

A mage girl asked if they could ask the Royal Knights for aid, but Luna told them that the main body of the Demon King’s Army is moving on the Capital as well, so we can’t expect any help from them.

Come to think of it, I think Princess Leonor said something similar.

In the chaos of the last few days, I completely forgot about that.

“Isn’t this pretty bad?”

Lynn whispered worriedly, and Keith and Taylor silently nodded in agreement.

“This town is a town of beginner adventurers. Most of the adventurers in town are rookies, with very few mid-level or exceptional adventurers. And the high-level adventurers in the other towns are headed over to the Capital to fend off the main body. It would be pretty tough for us to confront a Demon King’s Army attack-“

“So we can’t expect any help from the Capital or other cities, huh.”

Keith said such gloomy words, but his tone is casual.

His expression, aswell, is a far cry from being gloomy.

“Um, shouldn’t you have a little more urgency?”

Yunyun, who had made her way to the corner of our table without us noticing, voiced her opinion.

Yunyun isn’t comfortable with strangers, so I suppose the only place where she can feel comfortable in such a crowd is by our side.

“We faced down that Destroyer, you know? Compared to that, this is far better.”

I waved a casual, dismissive hand at Yunyun who is the only one amongst us that’s wound up.

“This and that are completely different things! Why are you so relaxed!? The Demon King’s Army could be attacking us, you know!? The town of Axel only has novice adventurers!”

What are you so angry for? Shaking your overdeveloped breasts like that...

“Oh, what about digging a large pit in advance?”

The mage girl suddenly shouted. It seems like she’s brainstorming ideas on how to defend the town of Axel.

The others too were offering their own ideas without a hint of despair.

My companions too were swept up in this atmosphere and started offering their own ideas, too.

“How about handing weapons to the townsfolk and forming them into a militia?”

Taylor said, crossing his arms.

Arming the townsfolk, huh? Well, there are quite a few interesting characters in town, and we also have a fairly large population of retired adventurers, so it might actually be a good idea.

“Not everyone who can fight is an adventurer, after all. Ah, I thought of a good idea! Why don’t we put the Axis Cultists who not even the Demon King’s army get along with in the front line and use them as our shields!?”

“Oh, that’s a good idea! I don’t think the Demon King’s Army would even be able to get close to them.”

I snapped my fingers and voiced my agreement with Keith’s idea.

“D-Don’t you guys have even a shred of conscience?”

“That’s way too far!”

Lynn and Yunyun stared at me like they were looking at something filthy.

“Why are you looking at me like that? Those guys do nothing but cause trouble every day, you know? Now is the time for them to actually be useful. If we tell them that this is the perfect chance to gain new converts, I’m sure they’ll hop right on board.”

I’ve gone through a lot of bad experiences at the hands of the Axis Cult, especially the time when I visited that hot springs town, Alcanretia. Honestly, I really don’t want to recall it.

“Victory comes to the swift. If we have Kazuma help us, this would be... Oh, yeah, Aqua-nee-chan isn’t here.”

She’s always the first to appear whenever there’s a commotion like this, so I guess I should ask Kazuma about her as well.

Just as I was about to stand up, someone else walked over to Kazuma.

He had two female companions behind him and had a handsome face that just seems to be asking for a good punch.

“I think I’ve seen that guy somewhere before.”

“You forgot again? He’s that famous swordmaster with the magic sword, Mi...Mi... What was his name again?”

Lynn started poking fun at me, but she herself couldn’t remember his name, and she put a finger to her temple as she fell into deep thought.

“Satou... Satou Kazuma. I don’t see Aqua-sama anywhere. Where is she?”

The guy asked what I wanted to ask, so I decided to hang back and observe.

“... ? Oh, Yamazaki. Long time no see.”

Ah, right, that’s his name. Yamazaki.

“It’s Mitsurugi! Hurry up and remember my name already! That wasn’t even remotely close! You’re not doing this on purpose, are you!? ...No, nevermind. More importantly, what happened to Aqua-sama? Is she not with you today?”

Oh, it’s Mitsurugi. Ah, well, I don’t really care about remembering a guy’s name.

Still, why is he addressing Aqua-nee-chan with “sama”?

Wait, he’s not an Axis Cultist, is he? Uwah, best to keep my distance from him, then.

“Aqua left behind a letter before running away from home.”

Seriously? She ran away from home? ...Well, she probably did something selfish, made Kazuma angry, and ran away in tears.

“She wrote that she’s heading off to take down the Demon King before slipping off into the night. If she caught the midnight carriage, she’ll probably be close to Alcanretia by now. With the number of Demon King’s generals reduced severely, she feels like she can break through the barrier right now, or so she says.”

“Take down the Demon King!!?”

Take down the Demon King?

Mitsurugi’s voice echoed through the guild and overlapped with my own internal monologue.

Is she serious?

She's an Archpriest of the Axis Cult, so I never paid much heed to her crazy actions and thought process, but to think that she'd try to take down the Demon King... I can't believe her brain has rotted to such an extent.

It seems like I wasn't the only one who was taken aback. The entire guild fell into silence upon hearing Mitsurugi's outburst.

Shock and bewilderment were reflected upon the faces of the adventurers present.

Kazuma and Mitsurugi continued talking, but I'm in no state to pay any attention.

"Aqua-nee-chan left on a journey alone!? There's no way she'll survive."

"It's just as Dust said. She's way too reckless. She barely has any common sense as it is. Can she even survive without her guardian Kazuma?"

"It's a little harsh to say this, but it really does make me feel uneasy."

"Yeah. I can't see her doing anything else other than livening things up with her party tricks."

My friends really look down on her, but at the same time I can't say I disagree.

"B-But Aqua-san's skills as a Priest are the real deal, so she might actually do really well on her own."

Yunyun was the only one who had any good things to say about her in this situation.

After spending quite a bit of time hanging out with Kazuma and his companions, shouldn't she have a good grasp on Aqua's abilities?

"Well then, tell me what Aqua-nee-chan has managed to do on her own thus far?"

"Um, err... Party tricks?"

She embarrassedly whispered, as that seemed to be the only thing that she could think of.

The adventurers around me said similar things, seemingly on the same page as me.

Those words are harsh, but they weren't making fun of her. Rather, everyone seemed to be genuinely concerned for Aqua.

"Aqua-san is really well liked in this town, isn't she?"

"She is the life of any party, after all. Plus, she has this air around her that makes you not want to leave her by herself."

Lynn and I met gazes and traded a bitter smile.

I don't think there's anyone in this town who genuinely hates her.

...No, wait, that might not apply to Sir Vanir.

"Calm down! Please calm down, everyone! ...Has anyone here seen Aqua-san today?"

Luna's voice rose over the guild, and the place fell silent for a moment.

I turned my gaze to my companions, but they all shrugged and shook their heads. I looked over the guild... And the results seem to be the same. It would seem that Aqua managed to leave town without anyone seeing her.

Seeing that, Mitsurugi made movements like he was about to dash out of the guild to chase after Aqua at any moment.

“T-That would be a problem! There’s a pressing need for experienced adventurers like you to assist in the defence of the Capital or this town...! I’ll send out an urgent notice to the other guilds to search for Aqua-san, so...!”

“Hey, if he wants to go, then just let him!”

Seeing Luna desperately beg to stop him, I couldn’t help but raise my voice.

Everyone’s attention seemed focused on me, so I went with the flow, put my feet up on the table and put on a pompous demeanor.

I can’t believe she said such pathetic things. Are we really that unreliable?

“We can handle the defence of this town with just the people here. Nee-chan, you might not be aware of this, but there are plenty of high-level adventurers in this town. There’s no need to beg this brat who is constantly surrounded by two women for help, just rely on us!”

There’s a cool line for you!

I bet the rest have fallen in love with my sharp tongue!

I surreptitiously cast a glance at my companions, and they were giving me a look halfway between suspicion and disgust.

Yunyun seemed taken aback by my statement, but she seemed at a complete loss for what to do. She had been fidgeting at the corner of my vision for some time now.

“Even if you say that...! How many adventurers do we have that are above level 20? I reckon most of the adventurers here have levels between ten and the low twenties at best. By convention, most adventurers would leave this town after hitting level 20 and move on to other towns surrounded by stronger monsters. We’d be very lucky just to have a handful of people here above level 20...”

Luna said that with a flustered expression... I can’t believe she doesn’t know about this despite being a guild staff.

Almost as if in response to my internal complaints, one of the adventurers stood up.

“I’m level 32.”

“...Eh?”

Luna let out a gasp of disbelief at those words.

As silence descended on the guild once more, another man stood up.

“Umm... I’m level 38....”

“Eh?”

Following those two, several other adventurers stood up and announced their levels.

Most of them were above level 30, and there were even some that went past level 40.

Perhaps doubting their self-proclaimed levels, Luna went around checking everyone’s cards with a doubtful look on her face.

It only took a short time before that look was replaced with one of astonishment.

“...W-Why are all of you staying in this town even after achieving such a high level!? The monsters around here don’t provide a lot of experience points...”

It’s only natural for Luna to be surprised.

However, every man in this building knows the true reason. The reason why they stayed in this town... No, perhaps I should say, the reason why they can’t leave this town.

In response to that question, one of the adventurers scratched his head sheepishly and said.

“Isn’t it obvious? That’s because we love this town.”

Bullshit.

Luna might be moved to the point of tears, but you can’t fool me that easily.

The adventurers who stood up are all regulars at the succubus shop! I’ve lost count of the number of times we’ve met each other in the store!

The fact that everyone who stood up is a man is the ultimate proof. I’d really like to call them out on it, but I’ll probably be dragged into it if I did, so... I think I’ll keep it to myself this time.

Part 2

In the completely rejuvenated guild, Luna took to her tasks in a flurry of activity.

The presence of mid-level adventurers seemed to have given her hope, and she's currently busy splitting everyone into squads. The adventurers who already have parties remained in them, and the ones who don't have enough members made them up from acquaintances and friends.

Soon, everyone had their own party... Except for a certain loner who remained by herself.

Needless to say, it was the embodiment of loneliness, Yunyun.

She seemed like she had nowhere to go, but she was sticking close to us like she was expecting something. She's standing just far enough away that it's hard to tell if she's part of our party or not.

My companions were shooting me meaningful looks, so I had no choice but to call out to her.

"Hey, what are you doing? This isn't your place."

Hearing that, Yunyun's face twisted into one of despair, and my companions widened their eyes in shock and started softly lecturing me.

Seems like my casual statement was completely unexpected to them.

"Umm... I-I'm sorry..."

Yunyun repeatedly bowed her head before slowly walking away, but I grabbed her hand before she could go too far.

I led her over to where Kazuma and his party were standing.

Yunyun gave me a confused look, seemingly not understanding what's going on.

“In terms of combat prowess, you're probably ranked first or second in this town, right? If a true Crimson Demon like you were to join forces with that irksome magic sword wielder, you might actually be able to face down the Demon King, don't you think? Go hunt down that damned annoying Demon King and give him a good few blows in our place.”

“Hey, if Yunyun is a true Crimson Demon, what does that make me? Why don't you make it clear right now?”

Someone petty in both chest size and attitude said something, but I ignored her.

“I'm a little worried just leaving these guys on their own. If it was just to get Aqua-nee-chan back, it'll be fine, but it's these guys we are talking about. They might end up getting dragged into fighting yet another troublesome enemy. It'd be safer to have a real Archwizard like you with them... Come now, you can cast Teleport, can't you? If push comes to shove, you can just teleport back here on your own, no problem.”

After I said that with a smile, Yunyun looked at me with moist eyes for some reason.

Is she happy because she got a rare compliment for once?

“Hey, why don't you tell me exactly what kind of Archwizard I am if not a real one!?”

Megumin barged in between the two of us and grabbed my shirt.

I just said the truth and this girl got mad at me!

“How are you this strong despite being so small!? Hey, stop shaking me! Don’t blame me if I puke on you!”

Don’t shake a man who has been drinking like this. I can feel the beer flowing back up into my mouth, so cut it out!

As I tried to drive Megumin off, I saw Yunyun smile in a corner of my vision.

“—I understand. I’ll be off to help Aqua-san! I-It’s only natural to help a f-friend in need...”

Oh, she made her own decision.

Seeing her smile, I couldn’t help but feel a little warm inside. For someone as shy and indecisive as her, that must have taken a lot of effort to do.

But now is not the time for that.

“Crimson Demons are a race that will never back down from a fight. Very well, I’ll take you on. Let’s take this outside!”

Megumin grabbed my shirt and started trying to drag me.

As I struggled with her, the conversation progressed without me.

I didn’t catch what exactly happened, but the Magic Sword Guy suddenly became depressed and needed to be comforted by his town hanger-ons.

That made me feel warm and fuzzy inside.

“Dust-kun! Dust-kun! Look, the handsome hunk got rejected! He even extended his hand like he’s hitting on her! Seems like even hunks can get rejected!”

“Seriously? Well, that’s an interesting development!”

“Gyahahaha! Even the legendary loner knows how to pick her friends!”

As Kazuma and I broke out into raucous laughter, Yunyun blushed and said something to the two hanger-ons, but I couldn’t catch it through the laughter.

Eventually, the two hanger-ons chased me away, and I made my way back to my companions.

It seems like Kazuma and others are still discussing something, but I suppose there’s no longer any need for me to butt in.

“You know, couldn’t you not make a scene everywhere you go?”

“Did you see that hunk’s face? I haven’t laughed that much in a long time.”

I said to Lynn, and she gave me a wry smile.

Taylor and Keith were off with the other adventurers discussing plans on how to counter the Demon King.

Lynn leaned in close to my ear and whispered.

“Aren’t you going to fight the Demon King, too? If you bring Faitfore along and use your true abilities, I’m sure you’ll be of great help.”

Lynn said that because she knows how strong I am as a Dragon Knight, right?

“Probably, but being in the spotlight like that doesn’t suit me. I’m just a fool who abandoned a promising life to hang around here. Defeating the Demon King is not for me.”

Plus, there are people here that I need to protect, too.

After that, the adventurers got busy discussing strategies to repel the Demon King.

I don't dislike these guys who are still this upbeat and optimistic despite the dire circumstances.

I drank my beer while observing their conversation. It seems like the handsome guy, his party, and Yunyun are to set off to chase after Aqua and defeat the Demon King, while Kazuma and his party are to stay back in Axel.

I don't disagree with Kazuma's assessment of his own capabilities, but at the same time, it doesn't seem like him.

He might complain a lot, but my true friend is someone who would put everything on the line for the sake of his friends.

Even if Kazuma agreed, I'm even more surprised that the Explosion Girl and the Masochist Crusader agreed to go along with this. I thought they would've dragged him along with them even if they had to tie him up in order to do it.

"They sure are a cold-blooded bunch, huh."

"You don't get it."

Lynn chuckled in response to my mutterings.

"What do you mean?"

"Why don't you take a good look at their faces?"

I did as I was prompted, and both the Explosion Girl and the Masochist Crusader were giving Kazuma an expectant smile.

Part 3

It's been a few days since then.

The adventurers who usually laze around busied themselves with training or hunting monsters to gain levels.

According to the information that Princess Leonor gave me before she left, the Demon King's Army sent quite a large division to attack this town.

Why would the Demon King's Army devote so many resources against a town of novice adventurers? There are several reasons.

First off, without a town of beginners, there would be no way to raise new adventurers. In particular most of the heroes with cheat like abilities started their journey in this town.

Thus, if this town was destroyed, there would be no more new heroes. I'm sure that's what they're thinking.

And there's also the factor of Kazuma's achievements.

He's defeated several of the Demon King's generals, and even put down that mobile fortress Destroyer. Of course they would be wary of him.

"In that case, perhaps I should be serious, too."

In the forests just a short distance away from town, I was training with a stick that was just a little shorter than myself.

I kicked a nearby tree and stabbed at several of the leaves that floated down.

I've been using a sword ever since I left my home country, but even after all this time, a spear still feels better in my hands.

“Dust is better with a spear than a sword.”

Faitfore happily said as she looked up at me while she was seated on the ground.

“Heh, don’t fall for me now.”

As I flipped my hair and spun my stick around in quick circles, Faitfore animatedly clapped her hands in joy.

Then, suddenly—

“What are you doing?”

A stern voice suddenly burst into the clearing as Lynn appeared from a tree behind me.

“What, you were watching?”

“I thought it was suspicious that the two of you were sneaking out together, so I followed you, but I never expected you to be secretly out training. And here I thought you finally awakened your inner lolicon and was about to report you... Did you come down with something?”

“I told you I have no interest in brats. Ow! Hey, don’t bite me!”

I quickly refuted, and Faitfore immediately bit me on the ankle.

Dammit, don’t start eating my leg just because you’re hungry.

“I’m just working up a bit of sweat because I haven’t been active lately, that’s all.”

I thrust my stick against the ground and casually leaned against it.

“You don’t need to hide it or anything. Still, to think that even you are going that far... Isn’t this pretty bad?”

“You worry too much. There are quite a few high-leveled people in town, and we have Sir Vanir and Wiz. We’ll manage somehow.”

“Ah, right, those two are here. But Vanir is a devil, right? If he had to pick a side, wouldn’t he fall in with the Demon King’s Army?”

“Ah... Come to think of it, you’re right. Maybe we should go ask him directly.”

As I disposed of the stick that I used as a spear, Faitfore came over, clambered onto my back, and tied the piggyback rope onto me as usual. She’s gotten really good at doing that.

“Hmm? He’s not in.”

“He seems to have gone out. Where could he have gone?”

“That’s strange.”

We paid a visit to Wiz’s magic item shop, only to find it empty.

Fairfore drooled the entire way here. It seems like she has been conditioned to expect a snack every time she visits here thanks to Sir Vanir’s efforts to make her feel welcome.

“Hmm, maybe Sir is keeping an eye on Wiz while she’s out shopping. Let’s come back here tomorrow.”

Just as I was about to leave, the door to the store opened.

What emerged from the store is a weird stuffed animal looking creature resembling a strange bird.

“Ah, a cute thing came outside.”

“It doesn’t look tasty at all.”

It seems like it really caught their eye, Lynn and Faitfore immediately started making a fuss.

“Are you customers? What are you looking for? Tell me if there’s anything you want.”

Contrary to his cute appearances, he sure speaks quite pompously.

The fact that it’s moving and talking means there’s someone inside of it, right?

“Oh, yeah, I heard that this store got a mascot. Is that you?”

“That’s just rude. You’re a brash and rude person. Ah, that dusky blonde hair, are you the thuggish and eternally poor adventurer that Vanir-sama was talking about?”

“It doesn’t make me angry when Sir Vanir says it, but hearing this guy say it doesn’t sit well with me.”

Hearing this stuffed toy prattle on gets on my nerves, so I vented my frustrations by kicking him a couple of times.

“How rude! Do you know who I am!?”

“You’re just an attendant at this store. And you’re wearing something weird, too. Can I pull down on this zipper? Come on, get out here!”

“Hey, stop pulling on my zipper! Cut it out! Dammit, I can’t go wild in a place that Sir Vanir has made his stronghold. Girl on his back, can you stop this boorish man?”

“Dust, there’s a weird smell coming from that zipper. It smells a lot like the guy who gives me treats.”

Faitfore pointed at the stuffed toy and frowned.

The one who gives her treats is Sir Vanir, right? If this guy smells the same, could it be...?

“Are you a devil?”

“Indeed, my name is Zereschrute. I’m a noble known as the Lord of Brutality and a devil.”

The stuffed toy arrogantly puffed out his chest.

Lord of Brutality, huh. I’ve heard that title back when I was still a knight. He was a character shrouded in mystery, but I never expected him to look like this.

“Humph, are you afraid... Why are you giving me such pitiful looks?”

“There are a lot of weirdos amongst the nobles and devils, aren’t there?”

“Considering Darkness and Vanir-san, I’ll have to agree.”

Rather than being surprised, this just affirmed my view on them.

Well, there is a shop run by a masked devil. I guess it wouldn’t be unexpected for there to be a devil wearing a mascot suit as part of the nobility.

“Well, whatever. Anyway, Lord of Whatever, where did Sir Vanir and Wiz go?”

“Your attitude remains unchanged even after knowing my identity. I don’t know if I should praise you... The two of them accompanied a young man named Kazuma to the dungeon. They said they’ll be away for a few days.”

They went out with Kazuma at such a time?

“What did Kazuma go out to do?”

“I don’t mind telling you, but I am a devil. There will have to be some terms agreed to if you want that information. Indeed, as a devil, the emotions I like the most are—”

I silently grabbed Zereschrute’s head, forced him to bend over, and slightly opened his zipper.

“Let your saliva drip into this.”

Faitfore let her accumulated drool that she has been holding back since she expected a snack here spill out into Zereschrute.

“Cut it out! It’s getting everywhere... Uгааah!? It hurts! Why does this saliva feel so hot!?”

Zereschrute tore himself away from me and rolled on the floor in pain.

I was going to laugh at his exaggerated reaction, but then I remembered something.

Fairfore is a White Dragon, which is a creature with sacred attributes. It wouldn’t be surprising if her saliva has sacred attributes, too.

To a devil, this might be even more painful than getting doused with boiling water.

After spending quite a bit of time rolling around on the floor, the stuffed mascot shakily got to his feet.

“What a scary human. To think that you would have a White Dragon at your beck and call... Okay, okay, I’ll tell you, just keep that girl away from me. I recall them saying something about helping the young man level up.”

Ah, I see. He told that pretty boy in the tavern that he'll leave Aqua to him, but he actually intends to chase after her after he's gotten stronger. It's just like Kazuma to be this dishonest.

If Sir Vanir is helping him, that probably means that he has no intention of helping the Demon King's Army.

"Sorry for disturbing you. Right, let's go home."

I got what I came here for, so I headed to leave, but Zereschrute grabbed me by the sleeve.

"Hold on a moment..."

Crap. I got taken in by his ridiculous appearance, but he is a devil, too. Did he lose his top over what happened earlier?

I placed a hand on my sword and took a step in front of Lynn, but Zereschrute simply stepped aside and pointed one of his wings towards his back.

"If you are leaving, could you please take that girl along with you?"

That girl would be referring to Loli Succubus, sitting in the corner of the store despondently muttering "Vanir-sama isn't here, Vanir-sama isn't here..." to herself, right?

Lynn decided to head back to the guild first, so I decided to carry Loli Succubus back to the Succubus shop by myself.

"So what were you doing there?"

"I longed for Vanir-sama's scent, so I went to the store to help out, only to be told that he won't be in town for a while."

This girl pays a visit to that store almost every day. Sir Vanir has no interest in romance, so he treats her fairly cold, but I suppose I can praise her determination for not letting that get her down at all.

“Both Sir and Wiz are out training with Kazuma.”

“Is it true that the Demon King’s Army is targeting this town?”

“How do you know about that? Luna told us it was strictly forbidden to spread the news outside the guild to avoid worrying the residents.”

Don’t tell me... she has a connection to the Demon King’s Army?

I’ve gotten so used to living in this town that it completely slipped my mind, but Succubi are devils as well. It wouldn’t be surprising for them to favour the Demon King’s Army over us humans.

“Why are you looking so scary all of a sudden? You’re not thinking anything weird, are you? I’ve had a few of my regulars tell me ‘I’ll protect you even if the Demon King’s Army attacks us, so can you please give me a discount?’ or something like that, that’s all.”

“Those idiots...”

So it’s because some people wanted to look cool in front of the succubi.

“*Sigh~*, they really are hopeless people.”

“So it really is true.”

“...Yeah, it is. What are you guys planning to do? Wouldn’t it be dangerous for you guys to oppose the Demon King’s Army?”

“Hmm. We are not part of the Demon King’s Army. All the Succubi say they’ll stay in town. If Vanir-sama tells us to support the Demon

King's Army, we'll obey, but I don't think he'll order us to do something like that."

She tilted her head with a finger on her cheek.

It doesn't seem like she's lying.

Honestly, I'm glad that the succubi are staying in town. All those high-level adventurers who are in town mostly stayed here because of the Succubus shop.

If the succubi choose to side with the Demon King's Army, I'm sure more than a few of them would decide to switch teams.

"Do you think we have any chance of winning?"

While I'm still carrying her, Loli Succubus gave me a serious look.

"Hmm, I wonder."

Having received the information from Princess Leonor beforehand, I know that the Demon King's Army is planning to send a sizable force towards us, so I can't be optimistic about our chances.

"For you to make such a serious face, it seems like this situation really is grave. But..."

Saying that, she closed her mouth and looked up at me.

"W-What is it?"

"But, Dust-san will protect us, won't you?"

Saying that, Loli Succubus gave me a reassuring smile.

I put her down and patted her on the head.

"Who knows. If you're scared, you should go hide somewhere."

“You say that, but you are going to do it anyway, right? You cheeky little.”

Stop poking me with your elbow.

“Yeah, yeah, say whatever you want.”

“Right, I’ll do that.”

Part 4

After escorting Loli Succubus to her store, I decided to take a walk down the main street, and my eyes met with the owner of a certain general goods store.

“Give me money.”

“You’re being way too abrupt! Can’t you say anything else?”

I told him in a simple and straightforward manner, but he lost his temper for some reason.

Normally, I would’ve dropped by to pick up the goods that he couldn’t sell, but I would always have to sell them off eventually, so I thought I’d be polite and skip the middleman this time.

“Sigh, you’re still the same as ever. Aren’t all you adventurers supposed to be busy right now?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Isn’t the Demon King’s Army targeting this town?”

Wait, the old man knows about it too? Whatever happened to keeping it under wraps?

“Where did you hear that from? You’re not trying to spread some scary information in order to drive up the price of weapons and food, are you? ...No, wait, that actually sounds like a good idea.”

A good idea popped out of my mouth.

“Hey, don’t slander me. Information is vital to a salesman like me. Serious happenings like this spread almost instantly through everyone in the business.”

It kinda irks me how he's stroking his chin and lording that information over me. Still, what kind of secret is this supposed to be? Just about everyone I run into already knows about it.

"Sigh. Well, there's no point in hiding it from you. Yeah, that seems to be the case. Are you planning on packing up and running?"

"Don't make fun of me. How much do you think I went through in order to open this shop? This is the castle that my late wife and I worked through sweat and tears to create! The Demon King's Army aren't customers, so I see no reason not to chase them all out."

He flexed his muscular biceps and let out a fearless laugh.

It doesn't seem like he has any intention of running away.

"You know, old man, you might end up losing your life here."

"I don't need a young man like you to remind me. Sure, life is precious, but everyone has things that are more important than life, right?"

He naturally said that, it doesn't seem like he's putting on a brave act for my sake.

"Well, it's none of my business anyways, so just do as you wish."

"Yeah, I'll do as I wish... Hey, Dust."

"Yeah?"

"Take this with you."

Saying that, he tossed a spear towards me.

"What are you thinking? I don't use a spear. And this is a pretty good weapon... If you're giving it to me, I'll take it, but don't ask for it back.

I'll find a place to sell this and have some fun with the ladies tonight!"

"I gave it to you, so you can do whatever you want with it."

Normally he would be yelling at me, but he's not even offering a single complaint this time.

"You're more used to using that than a sword, aren't you?"

This old man likes to boast about being an amazing adventurer. I guess he wasn't lying about that.

"Just don't regret it later."

"I won't... I'm expecting great things from you."

As I shouldered the spear and prepared to leave, those unexpected words from the old man made me turn back in a panic.

But the old man simply waved at me before disappearing back into the store.

Afterwards, I paid a visit to the bars and gambling establishments that I frequented whenever I had money to spend, and found that almost everyone knew about the Demon King's Army's attack.

Even when I passed by the police station, one of the officers called out to me, saying "Dust, please do your best to protect this town."

They normally chase me around like a dog running down a meal, so hearing them say that now kinda gives me the creeps.

In the end, most of the residents already know about the Demon King's Army's attack, but not a single one of them are making preparations to escape, and all of them seem intent on staying here.

“Everyone is saying they won’t run away.”

Faitfore said as we sat down on a bench by the park to let Faitfore finish off the sticks of roasted meat that a dewy-eyed street merchant handed over to her.

“This town is just full of easy-going idiots. They do say that the only cure for idiocy is death. Or was it that even death can’t cure idiocy?”

“Dust, you’re not running away?”

Faitfore probably asked that question with no ill intent, but hearing it caused me to stiffen up.

Come to think of it, I could run away too.

That option never even crossed my mind until now. I went around asking everyone if they are planning to run for it, but I never realized that it was an option for me as well.

“Well, I’m an idiot just like them, I guess.”

I stood up from the bench and rested my hand on the sword hanging from my waist.

“You are my Knight, so from now on, don’t use your spear unless it’s to protect me or someone you really want to protect. Do your best with that sword instead.”

That was the promise I made with Leonor when we parted.

For the sake of someone I really want to protect.

That would of course be Lynn.

And I suppose I could add my friends, companions... And all the lovable idiots who live in this town to that list.

Part 5

In the plains a short distance away from town, I stood across from Keith and Taylor with my weapon— a spear, in hand.

“Why the sudden change of heart, Dust?”

“I can’t believe you of all people would ask us to train with you. And why a spear?”

The two of them didn’t even bother to raise their weapons, instead barraging me with complaints.

Lynn and Faitfore were seated on a nearby rock. It seems like they only intend to observe us.

“I want to retrain myself in preparation for the Demon King’s Army’s attack.”

“That spirit is admirable, but can I really take it at face value?”

“Don’t be fooled so easily, Taylor. I’m sure you know by observing Dust’s daily activities that he is not a man to be admired. And seriously, why a spear?”

Taylor crossed his arms and nodded in response to Keith’s words.

“Did you commit a crime so grave that you have no choice but to silence us under the guise of training? It pains me to say this, but as your companion I shall have to put a stop to you right now.”

Hey, don’t raise your shield and sword now!

“It’s regrettable to do this to a friend, but this is for the sake of the world and everyone in it. By the way, did they already put a bounty on your head?”

Don't cry crocodile tears while nocking your bow!

"What are you talking about!? Don't make me sound like a vicious criminal without proof!"

They just keep thinking about worse and worse things. Just what is with that imagination of theirs?

"I really want to regain my skills with a spear. And there's also a few things I need to talk to you about."

Lynn already knows, but I haven't yet revealed my past to Taylor and Keith.

The reason why I have a spear in my hand and my past.

And Faitfore's secret.

I decided to tell these two everything.

"Taylor, Keith, please listen to me."

I told the two of them about my past, Faitfore's true identity, and everything else that seemed related.

The two of them listened to me without a single word, only to let out a huge sigh at the very end.

I prepared myself for any responses they might have, but they stayed silent. Their expressions also seemed the same as usual, without a hint of surprise at all.

"Don't you guys have anything to say?"

"I'm just thinking that you finally came clean with it."

"Actually, did you really think you kept it a secret all this time?"

...Eh?

These guys knew about my past all this time?

“Since when did you know?”

“Well, I’ve always had some inkling, but it’s only until recently that I became certain of it. You seem just like a regular old hoodlum right now, but back when we first met, you had the air of a well-educated person. There were quite a few rumours about you being a former knight or a runaway nobleman.”

“Yeah, that’s it. And your way of speaking was weird, too. It’s quite obvious that you’re forcing yourself to speak this way. Plus it’s really suspicious how bad your skills with a sword are despite your high physical stats.”

So they already knew about the secret that I tried so hard to hide from them.

Sometimes I wonder why I even bother trying.

“So, what you just told me is not entirely a surprise... Though, the fact that you were that rumoured Dragon Knight really was outside my expectations. As for Faitfore... There’s no way a normal young girl would be able to eat that much food.”

“Yeah. There’s something just fundamentally strange with that appetite of hers. Plus, she did show up just as the White Dragon sighting rumours started flying around town.”

I felt a little relieved that I was worried over nothing, but there’s still a little bit of grumpiness within my heart. Sure, it’s great that they accepted my explanation easily, but if I knew this would happen, I would’ve just come clean at the start.

“Sigh~. Well, I guess it’s a good thing that you two are so quick to accept it.”

I felt much lighter after letting out a sigh, as if all the guilt and weariness I felt for hiding things from my companions vanished at once.

“Dust, we are companions. That much I’m sure of.”

“Yeah, so there’s no need to hide all this stuff from us.”

Companions, huh. Yeah, I suppose. I should put a little more faith in them from now on.

“So, you already knew about when Lynn and Princess Leonor swapped places?”

At those words, their expressions changed drastically into ones of complete shock as they twisted to look at Lynn.

“Eh? Y-Yeah, of course. There’s no way we could mistake one of our companions for someone else. Right, Keith?”

“O-Of course. Doesn’t that go without saying?”

The two of them gave me a very suspicious smile as they let out a forced laugh.

“Oh? Then tell me when we were switched. You’re my companions, so I’m sure you know that much, right?”

Lynn stepped in, asking the two of them with a wide smile on her face.

“That’s an easy question to answer. Keith, I’ll let you do the honours.”

“Hey, don’t dump it onto me just because you don’t know the answer!”

“Come on, hurry up an answer~!”

Lynn jumped off the boulder, and approached the two of them with a wide smile.

Oh the other hand, the other two slowly backed away.

Taking in the entire scene, and Faitfore who was lazily gazing at them from the side.

“Buha, ahahahahaha!”

I couldn’t help but break out into laughter.

I was prepared to be cast out of the party upon revealing my past to them, but I never expected such an outcome.

“Stop laughing and placate Lynn already!”

“Please, Dust!”

“Oh, fine. Come here, I’ll give you a warm hug, so let them off... That was close! Don’t just start blasting magic at me! I could’ve died!”

Facing Lynn who was slowly approaching with her staff in hand, the three of us struggled to use each other as human shields.

“I could tell right away. After all, your chest—”

“You’re not thinking stuff like ‘the imposter has bigger breasts’ or ‘having great assets sure is a sign of elegance’, are you?”

“Not at all!” x3

We frantically blurted out one excuse after another until Lynn lowered her staff.

After that, I started training with my companions.

“Pant, pant... You fight like a completely different person.”

Taylor, his butt flat on the ground, said between breaths as he tried to regain his composure.

A short distance away, Keith threw his empty quiver to the side as he collapsed to the ground.

“Seriously, not even a single arrow hit?”

I soundly defeated the both of them, but I’m not satisfied with that.

When I put my all into fighting with a spear, it’s clear to me that my skills have regressed. Sure, I’m more agile and my blows hit harder than if I was wielding a sword, but it’s a far cry from when I was in my prime.

“Keith, Taylor, thanks. You guys really helped me out a lot. Right, Faitfore, why don’t we take a walk and go for a little training in the meantime.”

It’d be pathetic for a Dragon Knight to not be able to ride a dragon.

“Oh!”

Lynn hurriedly rushed in front of Faitfore as she enthusiastically started taking off her clothes, blocking her from our sight.

“Hey, turn around.”

I don’t have the slightest bit of interest in a little girl’s body, but the last time I said that, Faitfore bit me, so I quietly turned my back to her.

“It’s fine now.”

Turning back around, I saw a large White Dragon before me, with Lynn seated on her back.

“Hey, why is Lynn riding on her?”

“It’s fine, isn’t it? She’d get more practice with two people riding on her than one. Now, come on, hurry up and get on.”

She’s saying some reasonable things, but I bet she’s just looking forward to taking flight again after that nighttime flight she had a while back.

“Oh, fine. It’ll be a little heavier than usual, is that okay?”

I said as I stroked Faitfore’s neck, and she rubbed her face against me. Seems like she’s fine with it.

I sat in front of Lynn, and she wrapped her arms around my waist.

“We’ll be flying around for a while, so you two get some rest.”

“I see. Then I’ll take you up on your offer.”

“Take as much time as you need. I’ll go take a nap.”

Taylor and Keith lay on the ground as they waved me off.

Faitfore flapped her wings, and my body was overcome with a feeling of weightlessness as we started rapidly ascending.

“It was dark out the other day, so I didn’t really notice, but this is actually quite scary, isn’t it?”

Lynn suddenly tightened her hug on me, pressing her body against mine. I could feel her breasts hitting my back, but... If only she had a greater volume...

“You were thinking of something rude just now, right?”

“Don’t strangle me! If we fall, you’ll die too!”

I almost fell off, but I managed to regain my position in time.

We quickly gained altitude to avoid anyone seeing us from the ground, but then I noticed something flying ahead of us. Several somethings, in fact.

“What is that? Lynn, can you see it?”

“Eh? Where is it?”

I pointed it out to her, and she narrowed her eyes.

“Hmm, all I can see is a dot.”

“Should we get closer?”

Those things were flying lower than us, so we can probably afford to get closer without them seeing us.

As we got closer, it became clear that it wasn’t a flock of birds.

“It’s... A winged human?”

“It’s probably some manner of devil.”

It has large, black, bat-like wings, the same as the ones on the Succubi or the demon Perrier that I fought against just the other day.

“Don’t you think it’s strange for there to be a bunch of devils flying all the way out here?”

“Yeah. Could they be scouts from the Demon King’s Army?”

In large scale battles, information is just as, no, more important than combat ability.

The importance of good information was drilled into me by my captain back when I was still a knight.

“Food can be obtained on the road, and lack of strength can be made up for by strategy, but it’s vitally important to obtain good information in advance. After all, in order to acquire food or develop good strategy, one must first have good information. Don’t forget that.”

He made such a deep impression on me that I can still remember every word.

Should I wipe them out here?

There are few enough that we can take them on if we pounce on them from the sky. Plus, we have Lynn’s magic with us.

No, wait, taking them out here might not be the best course of action. If they don’t return, it would just raise the guard of the Demon King’s Army, and they would send out scouting parties in greater numbers.

“So, what should we do?”

“If they are part of the Demon King’s Army, I wouldn’t mind taking this chance to reduce their forces, but there is the chance that they are simply unrelated stray devils.”

“Stray devils... Well, there are devils like Vanir-san, so I suppose...”

Plus, it’s not exactly normal for Succubi to coexist with people like in Axel. There are a lot of weirdos amongst both nobles and devils, so it’s hard to completely dismiss this possibility.

It’s not like we can just go “Sorry, we mistook you for devils” if we attack them by mistake.

“But if they are part of the Demon King’s Army, it would be dangerous to make contact with them, right?”

“Yeah... If only there’s a way to know who they are... Ah.”

I thought of a way to make contact with them without raising their suspicions.

I instructed Faitfore to turn back, and we took a long detour to make sure we weren’t discovered as we made our way back to Taylor and Keith.

“Oh, they’re back already.”

“Hey, come on, it might be more refreshing in the sky, but even so, aren’t you a little too quick—”

Ignoring Keith who got blown away by Lynn’s magic, I once again took to the skies.

“I’ll find a way to take care of them, you go back ahead of me.”

“I got it, I’ll explain things to them.”

After letting Lynn dismount, I flew back towards the devils... No, back towards Axel.

Part 6

“Hey~. Is Lolisa here~!?”

After reaching the Succubus shop, I started calling for Loli Succubus while searching for her.

“Oh, Dust-sama. Are you looking for that girl?”

The manager succubus walked over to me, her body oozing with sexuality.

Unlike Loli Succubus, all the right parts of her are filled to bursting, and every single one of her movements gave off an erotic impression.

“She wasn’t at the magic item shop, so I thought she might be around here, but I don’t see her around at all.”

I did take a look around the store, but all I saw were Succubi with bountiful bodies that made me want to jump on them. There wasn’t a single hint of that shrimpy body around.

“Well, you came in at just the right time. She’s been in a state of depression ever since Vanir-sama left town. We can’t work with her like this, so please take her with you.”

The manager called Loli Succubus over, and she looked like she had the life sucked out of her. She constantly sighed and barely raised her head from the ground.

“You look really out of it.”

“If I don’t see Vanir-sama and take in his scent at least once a day, I lose the drive to do anything.”

“Isn’t Sir Vanir’s body made out of dirt? Just go take in the smell of the dirt outside.”

“Don’t compare Vanir-sama’s body to common dirt!”

No, it is just common dirt.

Sir Vanir told me before. Only the mask is actually part of his true body, the rest of it is just formed out of whatever dirt that happens to be nearby.

“Anyway, I need your help with something. You’re not doing anything else, right?”

“No way. I don’t feel like moving or doing anything today.”

She turned her face to the side and puffed out her cheeks, flatly refusing me.

She really is a troublesome girl.

“I’ll give you something that will perk you right up, so don’t say that.”

“I’m not falling for your tricks anymore. Like that time you lied to me about that cup that Vanir-sama used. Ah, right, what happened to the manju with Vanir-sama’s seal on it that you promised me before!?”

She really has a talent for remembering useless things.

I always have to come up with some random lie to convince her, and she’s really making me work for it.

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry. This time it really is a one hundred percent genuine item that Sir Vanir used.”

“Hmph.”

Her face was pointed away from me, but her eyes swiveled to look my way.

“This item is a must have for any fan of Sir Vanir.”

I pulled out a pair of boxers from my pocket. The moment I did so, Loli Succubus leapt up to it and started intensely looking it over.

“You can’t fool me that... I can smell a familiar scent from this. It smells just like Sir Vanir!”

It’s a little creepy to see her fawn over it with such intensity.

Still, I managed to fool her. I simply got these boxers from one of the stores on the main street and rubbed it in the dirt in the yard of the magic item shop.

“Oh, fine, I’ll help you just this once. Don’t think I’m a cheap woman.”

It’d be a little more convincing if she wasn’t carefully wrapping the pair of boxers in her handkerchief before placing it in her pocket.

“So, anyway, what did you want my help with?”

“Ah, well, you see—”

“So I just have to talk to some suspicious looking devils, right?”

“Pretty much. And if they are part of the Demon King’s Army, can you get more details out of them?”

“It’s fine, we’re good at getting stories from our customers. Plus, we owe quite a bit to the people of this town, so this is just a small way I can repay them.”

She puffed up her chest with a confident look.

When I think of how she was just a moment ago, I couldn’t help but feel uneasy, but right now I have no choice but to leave it in her hands.

I got onto Faitfore who was hiding in the forest in her dragon form, and for some reason, Loli Succubus got on behind me too.

“Hey, you can fly on your own, can’t you?”

“There’s a large difference between Faitfore’s speed and my speed. Plus, I always wanted to ride a dragon. Now, let’s set off.”

I told Loli Succubus who was excitedly waving her arms around to hold on tight before giving Faitfore the signal to ascend at top speed.

“Waaah! It’s too fast! My butt kinda hurts if I sit on her, so I have to float, but I don’t think I’ll be able to fly on my own after experiencing this.”

Is this why you wrapped your legs around my waist?

“Stop shaking! It’s dangerous!”

The voice coming from behind me is annoying.

The reason why her butt hurts is probably because of Faitfore’s sacred attribute. It probably doesn’t sit very well with devils.

“Oh, I can see them.”

I slowed down and observed the group of flying devils from a distance.

Their bat-like wings resembled that of Loli Succubus, but they seem to be all men.

“Do you know what kind of devils they are?”

“Ugh, Incubi...”

Loli Succubus spat under her breath while making a disgusted face. It doesn’t seem like she gets along with them.

“Incubi are the male version of Succubi, right?”

I recall hearing about them being creatures that suck essence from women instead of men like the Succubi.

“Don’t compare me to them! Incubi are the natural foe of all succubi! Sure, we are both dream demons, but they are all creepy narcissists who have an overly inflated opinion of themselves. Just seeing them makes my skin crawl!”

Her face turned bright red as she worked herself up during her rant. It seems like she really dislikes them.

She gets along with just about anyone other than Axis Cultists, so it’s really surprising to see her show such spite and disgust towards someone.

“So I guess going up to talk to them is out of the question. Alright, I guess I’ll think of something else.”

“No, I’ll do it. Please let me do it!”

I thought she would’ve lost her motivation, but she instead said that with a look of determination in her eyes.

“Well, aren’t you motivated. What’s up?”

“I once lost a customer to a cross-dressing incubus... He told me that he liked cute girls like me, but he went ‘Not a boyish-looking girl, but an actual boy!? That is exactly what I’ve been looking for!’ and tossed me aside! Can you believe that!? It’s ridiculous, isn’t it!? I’ll never forget that humiliation! Unforgivable, unforgivable, unforgivable...”

She clenched her fist and started muttering under her breath like she was trying to cast some kind of curse.

It sounds like I'd be better off not prying too deeply into that.

Still, at this rate, she might end up marching up to them and hurling insults into their faces. I should try and lighten her mood a little.

"I-I see. That guy has a really poor eye for people. No matter how you look at it, you're far more charming. If it was me, I would've chosen you in a heartbeat."

"Ehehe, right? You do get it."

Her mood instantly improved and she shyly started tracing circles around her cheek with her finger.

Between Yunyun and her, it feels like I'm surrounded by nothing but easily fooled people. Ah, though, I guess that doesn't apply to Lynn.

"Oh, they landed and seem to be taking a break. If you want to talk to them, now's your chance."

"Okay. Oh, Dust-san, please come together with me."

"Why? Wouldn't they be on guard if a human like me was with you?"

"It's fine. I'll handle that part, leave it to me."

Seeing her this confident somehow made me even more uneasy, but since I've already decided to leave it to her, I have no choice but to trust her with this.

We landed some distance away in order to avoid their attention, and Faitfore turned back into her human form and crawled onto my back as usual.

Then we approached where the Incubus have set up camp, with me standing a short distance behind Loli Succubus.

As we got closer, I managed to get a clear look at them for the first time, but, really, what the hell are they?

They had overly lush and thick hair, they had piercings dangling from their ears, and despite looking clearly male, their faces were caked with makeup. They even had eye shadow.

They wore black suits without a tie. The shirt that they wore underneath were garishly coloured, and had a large gap at the chest area, exposing them for everyone to see. Seeing a man's bare bosom doesn't make me happy at all.

They had several rings on their fingers, and the way they constantly caught the sun is kinda annoying.

After landing on the ground, their wings have disappeared, making them look just like ordinary people at first glance.

"Um, what are you all doing here?"

Loli Succubus fearlessly approached and called out to them, despite them being totally suspicious by any metric.

"Oh, hey, aren't you a cute little thing. Is there something you want with us?"

He glanced at me, but completely ignored me. It seems like they just aren't interested in men. Well, I suppose I can't get too angry about that.

"...Umm, I'm just wondering what you are all doing here..."

"Well, we are just taking a break under the shade of this tree, my pretty little bird."

I think I felt a chill go down my spine.

Can't you guys say anything without wildly gesturing? And stop flipping your needlessly long bangs every time you talk. If it's getting in the way, then just cut it off.

"Is that so?"

To think that she would be able to keep smiling despite facing a bunch of guys whose very existence is annoying, I must really hand it to Loli Succubus.

"By the way. You are all incubi, right?"

She said while tilting her head, and all the incubi suddenly stood up at once.

Oh, their smiles are completely gone from their faces. So they can put on a serious look when they want to.

I took a few steps forward and put myself in front of Loli Succubus.

"Oh, wow, that's so cool—. I wonder, just what are you thinking coming up to talk to us despite knowing our true identities?"

Bat wings sprouted out from their backs all at once. It seems like they have abandoned any attempts to keep their identities secret.

"There's no need to be so alarmed. I'm a devil too."

Loli Succubus stepped to the side and turned around, showing off the bat-like wings on her back.

"Oh! If you're part of the same business, you should've told us earlier."

The tense atmosphere disappeared in an instant.

When he made two finger guns and winked at her while saying "Oh, you're such a bad girl", it made me almost want to puke.

“Are you heading towards the town of Axel?”

“Yeah. We have a little job there.”

“Could you be scouting the place in preparation for the attack?”

“Hmm? Well now, that’s a top secret even amongst the Demon King’s Army, so how do you know about it?”

Their tone remained light, but their eyes suddenly narrowed.

There were a few of them who started reaching for the daggers at their waist.

“Well, you see, I’m also sneaking into Axel to gather intelligence.”

“Hmm? But the man next to you is a human, right?”

“Yes, indeed. He’s a collaborator with the Demon King’s Army.”

If you’re going to come up with such a back story, you should tell me in advance. If you suddenly spring that on me, all I can do is just smile.

And I doubt they’ll believe such an obviously made up cover story.

“Come on, look at his flippant face. He really does look like a traitor, doesn’t he?”

“Ah, that’s true. Is the child on his back camouflage too? Not bad.”

“You really like money, don’t you?”

“I get you, I get you. You might be wearing clothes, but you’re nothing but a pig underneath.”

I’ll kill these guys later.

I really don’t like how they believed it so easily, but for now I’ll have to be patient.

“Incidentally, I’m a subordinate of Vanir-sama.”

“Eh, you’re talking about that Vanir-sama, right? The same one who pulled all kinds of pranks at the Demon King’s castle and gave the Demon King nothing but headaches, right? I heard he was demoted... I really feel for you.”

He used his original way of speaking for a moment there. Still, I can’t believe Sir Vanir used to pull that kind of stuff at the Demon King’s castle, too.

Kazuma told me that Sir Vanir used to be a General of the Demon King while we were sharing a few cups together, but I thought he was exaggerating and dismissed it. I can’t believe it was actually true.

If I recall, he’s working at Wiz’s store because he wants a dungeon of his own and is saving up for that, right?

“Then, shall we exchange some information?”

“Yes, please.”

I feigned an air of disinterest as I listened in on the conversation.

Thanks to Loli Succubus who’ve spent years training her conversation skills while working in the service industry, we managed to gain quite a fair bit of useful information.

In short, the Incubi, who had the most experience with humans and could easily pass themselves off as humans, were chosen to be the scouting part.

While it’s true that they look close enough to humans, their eccentric dress sense and mannerisms meant that there’s no way they can ever blend in.

Still, this is worse than I anticipated.

According to them, the Demon King's Army dispatched far more forces to Axel than I expected.

Not only did they have an impressive amount of forces at their disposal, but they also sent out these guys to obtain detailed information about Axel in advance. It seems like the person in charge of the army is no fool.

And it would become far worse if they were alerted and reinforced. If they successfully managed to scout out Axel, they'll be put on guard... No wait, will they be on guard if they know how Axel really is like?

Adventurers who start drinking and partying in the middle of the day.

And the free and spirited inhabitants who wouldn't lose out to those adventurers.

Plus there's the Axis Cultists led by Aqua-nee-chan who go around doing whatever they want, causing trouble and being disliked by everyone.

...Wouldn't letting them see that actually cause them to lower their guard?

"Um, if you don't mind, I can show you around the town of Axel. I know that town inside and out, ehehehe."

After they finished talking, I interjected while rubbing my hands together, but Loli Succubus looked at me in confusion.

"Eh? Really? That'll help a lot! Thanks!"

The incubus replied in a frivolous tone, accompanied with exaggerated body movements.

Ah, I really want to punch him in his face.

“Hold on, Dust-san.”

Loli Succubus pulled on my clothes and dragged me aside.

Once we’ve gotten a fair distance away, she pulled on my ear and whispered.

“What are you thinking?! Why are you helping the enemy!?”

“Don’t yell in my ear! Think about it. Rather than letting them wander around as they will, wouldn’t it be better for us to guide them around?”

“You mean only letting them see stuff that would put them off their guard, right? ...Well, it is true. You really did think it through for once.”

“There’s no need to say ‘for once’, but yes. If you ask the other succubi for help, we should be able to avoid giving them information they shouldn’t know.”

“I see. Okay, I’ll go speak to my coworkers and senpais!”

“I’m counting on you.”

Hopefully, this will make the Demon King’s Army lower their guard.

Part 7

I left dealing with the Incubi to Loli Succubus and returned to the Adventurer's guild.

After locating Lynn and the others who went back before me, I joined them at the table.

"Oh, you're back. What happened to the Devils?"

"I've taken care of that. Oh, and I heard some really bad information—"

I gave them an abridged version of what happened while leaving out anything that has to do with Succubi.

When I told them that the forces of the Demon King's Army are far larger than we expected, they gave me wide eyed looks.

"Hey, isn't this bad?"

Keith muttered under her breath, but none of us replied.

It's probably because all of us are thinking the same thing.

"We might have a few adventurers above level 30, but even so we really don't have that much combat power. Wouldn't this be pretty tough?"

"I agree with Taylor. It might be impossible to simply rely on adventurers alone."

Taylor and Lynn both said with serious tones.

"Even if you say that, we don't exactly have a lot of other options. There's the guards and the cops, but they aren't particularly strong and there are very few of them. Someone strong enough to fight on par with adventurers..."

“It’d be reassuring if we could get Vanir-san and Wiz-san on our side.”

I did pay a visit to the magic item shop to make sure, but they happened to be out at the time.

I don’t think they’ll fight against us, but it’s unclear if they will actively help us. Wiz will probably be willing to do it, but Vanir is a former Demon King’s general, after all.

“I wonder. I have high hopes for Sir, but I can’t read his mind.”

Even after spending so much time at his side, I still have no idea what goes through his head.

I do know he loves the dark emotions that humans produce when they experience disappointment, but that’s about it.

“In that case, the only thing we can do is get stronger, but there’s a limit as to how many levels I can gain in such a short period of time. We might be able to level up faster if we had the weakest class like Kazuma, but for us, getting one or two levels would probably be the limit.”

“It’s just as you said, Dust. If only there’s a way for us to suddenly become stronger in a snap.”

Taylor’s words caused us to cross our arms and sigh.

Raising our levels would be the best option, but I doubt we’ll be able to gain that much power in such a short time.

In this situation where we had nothing to do but worry, Lynn suddenly looked up from the floor and stared at me.

“But, even if it is impossible for us, can’t Dust do it? If he can get back his strength as a Dragon Knight?”

Hearing that, Taylor and Keith suddenly turned to look at me.

“Oh, yeah, training Dust up is our shortcut to victory.”

“Leaving everything to Dust doesn’t sit well with me, but it seems like that is the only way.”

Normally I would’ve flatly turned them down because it’s too troublesome, but this time is different. If I could regain my former strength, it might open up a path to victory.

“Alright, leave it to me! I’ll endure any sort of training you send my way!”

I put on a strong front in order to inspire my companions.

“What kind of training would be best, I wonder? A painful course that leaves you one step away from death would probably be best.”

“Hey, Lynn.”

Why are you suddenly saying such dangerous things out of the blue?

“Ah, how about we throw him into some dangerous dungeon somewhere. He probably won’t die with a spear in hand. Yeah, that could work.”

“Hey, Keith.”

Why are these guys saying such callous things like it’s none of their business?

“No, wait, we should think about this seriously. If we want him to regain his strength, the best way to do so would be to fight against large numbers. However, if he’s going up against weaklings, it wouldn’t be much good as training.”

Oh, as expected of Taylor. He's the only one who has given a proper suggestion.

"So we need an enemy that's fairly strong, numerous, and is also something Dust will fight against to his last breath. If only there was such a convenient enemy..."

"Would there even be a foe that would fit all those requirements? But, well, as long as Dust is willing to fight them, the rest should fall into place. You'll be fine with anything that's humanoid and looks pretty enough, right?"

"Oh, you do get me."

As I nod in complete agreement, Lynn glared at me.

"Female monsters that come in large numbers... Ah, I just thought of something."

Keith clapped his hands together before whispering in Taylor and Lynn's ear.

After hearing it, their faces lit straight up and they started nodding in agreement.

"Oh, that's a really good idea, Keith!"

"Yeah, yeah, it fills all the conditions!"

"Hey, don't just keep it amongst yourself, tell me too. It's just making me more curious."

"Oh, you'll know when you get there."

The wide smiles the three of them gave me made me even more concerned, but they wouldn't tell me anything more no matter how often I asked.

My instincts are telling me this is a dangerous place to be.

I silently slipped my chair back.

“Oh, I just remembered I have something important to attend to. Seeya.”

I hurriedly tried to get up, but Keith and Taylor grabbed me by the shoulders before I could leave.

“Where do you think you’re going? Didn’t you say you’ll endure any sort of training?”

“Don’t worry, you’ll meet with the female monsters you like so much. And she’ll have huge tits too.”

“Isn’t that great, Dust?”

“Who would believe that!? And stop talking to me in that fake gentle tone! Faitfore, stop eating and help me!”

I called out to my partner, who had been busy filling her belly this entire time, for help.

She glanced in my direction and looked like she was about to stand up, but Lynn slid her dessert in front of her, and she instantly sat back down.

“Don’t let your appetite get the better of you! H-Hey, why are you approaching with that rope!? Come on, let’s talk this out calmly, yeah? C-Come on!”

My companions ignored my words entirely, and soon I was tied up and being airlifted to the destination.

As I swayed in the wind, I could see the plains flying past below me.

We flew along at speeds far surpassing that of any carriage, and Axel quickly disappeared from view.

Did Princess Leonor see the same scenery when she was strung up like this?

“Umm, say, can’t you untie me now?”

“No way. If we untie you, you’d run away.”

“Where would I run to!?”

Right now, I’m currently tied up as we flew through the sky.

To be more specific, I’m currently hanging from a rope attached to Faitfore’s neck.

Lynn is the only one riding on Faitfore’s back.

Having Taylor and Keith along would be too heavy for Faitfore, so Lynn was the only one who came along. They were looking at Fatifore enviously as we left.

...Seems like they really wanted to ride her.

“Yeah, this wind feels good.”

I tried to enjoy the situation in order to escape the reality of the situation, but that didn’t change anything at all.

“Hmm? This scenery looks familiar.”

“Of course it would. You’ve come here before.”

Hmm? I’ve been here before?

We flew in a straight line ever since we left Axel... Ah, right, if we go in this direction, we’ll reach...

“Did you forget? If we keep heading in this direction, we’ll reach Alcanretia.”

“Pfft!? H-Hey, are you serious? What business do you have bringing me to the headquarters of the Axis Cultists?”

I have nothing but bad memories of that city.

Between the aggressive recruitment efforts and the chaos that Sir Vanir caused, I have no desire to go back to that city filled with nothing but crazies!

“Let me down! I’d rather die than go to that city again!”

There’s no way I would come out unscathed if I fell from this height, but it’s better than going to that city.

As I flailed around with that in mind, my body suddenly descended towards the ground.

“Uwaaaaaaaah!?”

“If you want to go down so badly, then I’ll give you what you want.”

Faitfore swooped down, stopping right before hitting the ground, at which point the rope attaching me to her was cut and I was tossed to the ground.

“That hurts! What are you doing!?”

“I just did what you asked. Oh, and here’s your spear too. Good luck~.”

The spear she threw impaled itself into the ground just a few fingers away from me. Hey that was dangerous!

Lynn, riding on Faitfore’s back, gave me a casual wave.

“Wait a minute! What are you trying to do, dropping me off in a place like this!? Which direction is Alcanretia!?”

“You don’t need to worry about that. This is our destination. Plus we’ve passed Alcanretia a long time ago. Dust, listen closely. This is the territory of a certain type of monster. All you need to do is survive. Good luck with that.”

After saying that, She and Lynn quickly ascended and took to the air.

I suppose this is better than being taken to Alcanretia.

I don’t know what kind of monster lives here, but I’ll just take them down when they show up.

As I took up my spear and scanned the area, I spotted a small dust cloud in the distance. It seems to be rapidly approaching.

“What is that? A pack of Lizard Runners?”

I squinted my eyes in that direction, and the figures slowly became clearer.

The moment I realized what they were, I broke out into cold sweat.

“Everyone, look! There’s a handsome blondie over there!”

“That slick and wild look is just my thing!!!”

“He looks like he has a strong sex drive! I can’t wait!”

A horde of female orcs appeared on the horizon with those loud cries.

“Y-You’re kidding me...”

Orcs are a race of monsters with an extremely high sex drive and whose male population has been completely wiped out.

Worst of all, they aren't just attracted to their own kind, but to humans too.

It'd be fine if they at least looked like humans, but even the ones who had hair had pig-like faces and rotund, hairy bodies. For most humans, that's completely unacceptable.

And now a group of such creatures were rushing over to me while drooling the entire way.

It's a nightmarish sight.

"Stop joking! Hey, Lynn! Get down here this instant! If you do it right now I'll forgive you!"

"You can do it. I believe in you. ...Make sure you protect it."

Don't cry fake tears for me!

"What do you mean by protect!? Make it clear! Are you talking about Axel? Or my partner!?"

I shouted at Lynn, but she simply waved at me as she flew off even further into the distance.

"You seriously abandoned me... You best remember this. When I get back, I'm going to strip you naked and fondle those pitiful breasts of yours!"

Just as I whipped around with my spear, the spear head fell off.

You're kidding me, right? Without a spearhead, this is just a long stick!

That old man cheated me!

"Oh, my, what are you planning to do with such a long rod in your hand?"

“If you really want to fondle breasts that much, you can do it to your heart’s content!”

I fearfully turned around, only to find that the orcs have already formed a semicircle around me.

All of them were blushing and breathing heavily. Don’t push your breasts together to emphasize them!

Their glowing, lust-filled eyes were just like that of a hunter after having located his prey.

“S-Say, don’t you think humans and orcs are incompatible with each other?”

“It’s fine, we don’t discriminate against other species, so it’s fine! You just need to stare up into the sky and do nothing!”

That’s not reassuring at all!

I looked for a way out, but they’ve already surrounded me. Just how many of them are there?

“I wonder if your hidden weapon is as wonderful as that stick you’re holding. *Pant, pant.*”

“No, no, it’s just as shabby as a rusty dagger! It’ll definitely disappoint you!”

“I’m not one to discriminate based on your weapon. Even if it is a rusty dagger, I’ll be sure to polish it into a mighty greatsword with my mouth.”

“Seriously, give me a breaaaaaak!!”

I don’t even want to think what would happen if these guys got their hands on me.

If orcs at least looked similar to humans, I'd be happy to go along with them, but no matter how I squint, I can only see them as pigs that happened to walk on two legs.

"A cute adventurer boy got away from me the last time, but there's no way I'll let you escape!"

"I was so close to stealing his first time!"

I don't know who they're talking about, but if someone else got away from them, then so can I!

"Don't you move! If you take one step closer..."

I waved my blunt stick around in front of me as a warning.

"No way. There's too many things I can't do if I don't get closer."

"I don't dislike pain. We can start with you beating me, then I'll take a ride on you."

"Definitely not!"

Crap, these aren't creatures I can reason with.

If I get taken down, I'll definitely be squeezed dry!

There's no way out of this but defeating them with this stick. God dammit all!

"I can't take it anymore! Let's get wet and slimy together!"

"I'll let you take the upper half, but I'm taking the first ride on the lower half!"

The horde of orcs closed in on me.

"Graaaaah! I'll definitely get home with a clean body! I'm getting the best dream from the Succubi once I get back!"

After making that declaration, I shouted to the sky and charged at them with manly tears in my eyes.

Relying on my spear as a walking stick, I barely managed to stay standing. I'm completely naked from the waist up, and the only thing I had below that was my underwear. My hair is a complete mess too.

I took a deep breath and shouted to the sky.

"Hah, hah, hah. I escaaaaaapeeeeeed!"

The joyous cry echoed throughout the plains.

After taking down a few of them, I managed to break out from the encirclement and use the forest and guerilla tactics to take them out one by one, but their amazing recovery speed meant that they kept coming back to join the battle.

As a result, I couldn't reduce their numbers at all.

No matter how many of them I defeated, they just kept coming back for more. It was a never ending nightmare.

After fighting for an entire day, I finally managed to escape from their clutches.

"When there's a will, there's a way..."

The sense of relief and freedom brought tears to my eyes.

I took a deep breath to calm myself.

"The head might have fallen off, but this still is a pretty good spear."

The spear turned long stick held up very well. I've lost count of the number of times I've stabbed or bludgeoned something with it, and it's still fully intact in my hand.

I casually swung around the stick that has been in my hand for half a day.

The sound it made as it swung through the air is clearly different. It's now completely a part of me.

In fact, the more orcs I took down, the better this stick sat in my hands.

“Is it all thanks to them?”

It's only thanks to being thrown into such adversity that I was able to regain my skills with a spear.

That time when an orc caught me and tore off my shirt—

Or that time when an orc licked my bare chest—

Or that time when I was this close from becoming one with them—

It's all thanks to those experiences that I became stronger. I should thank my companions who threw me into this desperate situation...

“Like hell I can!”

Just thinking about the despair and fear I felt when I was being cornered made all the hairs on my body stand on end.

“I'll never forgive you! I'll never forgive you!”

After vowing revenge on my companions, I spotted a small white dot in the distance.

Seems like Faitfore is coming to pick me up. Though I still held a grudge against her for choosing to fill her belly over helping me, she

definitely didn't understand the situation at the time, so I think I'll let her off.

However, I'll never forgive those guys! Just wait till I get back to Axel.

Part 8

“We’re sorry, Dust. This is our apology, please accept it.”

When Taylor spotted me entering the guild, he immediately approached me and said before I could even get a word in.

“You can’t resolve this with a single apology... Hey, what are you trying to do?”

I glanced into the bag he placed on the table and noticed quite a bit of money was in it.

“You can take it all with you. Go ahead and use it on women or gambling or anything else you want.”

“I’ll pretend nothing happened today.”

“O-Oh?”

I was taken aback by the sudden kindness of my friends, and my rage immediately subsided.

With this much money, I can pay off all my debts and still live comfortably for a few days.

“We’ll take care of Faitfore-chan for you too, so feel free to let loose.”

How considerate of you.

“If you’re willing to go that far, I’ll forgive you. Alright, I’m going to find a pretty lady to play... play...”

A sudden chill went down my spine.

Why did that orc’s face pop into my head? I’m about to go have fun with a pretty lady...

“Ara, Dust-san, you’re back.”

In response to that voice, I turned around to see Luna walking towards me with her respectable pair of breasts wobbling—

“Eeeep!”

“Eh? What’s the matter!?”

For some reason, I let out a scream upon seeing her chest.

“Ah, no, I mean, umm, sorry, but stay away from me.”

“Y-Yes?”

Luna walked away with a suspicious look on her face.

W-What’s wrong with me? For some reason, the moment I saw her breasts, my heart rate immediately spiked.

“You look pale. Is something wrong?”

“I-I’m fine.”

Seeing Lynn’s face calmed me down.

J-Just what was all that about?

I took a deep breath and looked around the room to calm myself down.

“Hmm?”

Upon seeing the waitresses and the female guild staff, my heart started beating rapidly and I once again broke out in cold sweat.

“What’s wrong with my body?”

I pressed my hand against my chest and looked at Lynn’s face, and the feeling immediately went away.

...It can't be. I had an idea about what's going on, so I decided to test it.

I looked back to the large chested waitress. Immediately, my heart began beating wildly.

I turned to Lynn, and I immediately calmed down.

So that is what is going on.

"Why are you glancing at me like that?"

Lynn said, her cheeks flushing slightly as she put on a mask of anger.

"Well, you see, after having all those orcs chase me, I can't help feel queasy when I see big breasts, but when I look at you I'm suddenly calm..."

With a slight crick, Lynn stood up.

Keith took his mug and backed away, and Taylor quickly led Faitfore away from the scene.

That was when I realized what a terrible mistake I made.

"Oh, so seeing large breasts reminds you of the orcs, but looking at me makes you calm, huh?"

"Ah, no, I don't mean it that way"

"Then what exactly do you mean? Fufu, fufufufu."

Don't wave your staff at me while laughing like that!

What are you going to do if even flat chests give me goosebumps!?

"*Sigh*~. I really feel safe next to you."

“Where did that come from? Ah, did you finally notice my charms?”

After somehow escaping from a really angry Lynn, I found myself in front of the Succubus shop before I realized.

I saw Loli Succubus cleaning the floors with a broom, so I sat down and looked dreamily up at her.

“Ah, maybe.”

“W-What happened to you? If you keep staring at me like that, I’m going to get all hot and bothered.”

Loli Succubus placed a finger on her cheek and started nervously twisting around.

Her body has no protrusions at the front or the back, so it doesn’t remind me of an orc at all.

It really helps that I don’t feel fear even when I’m next to her.

“Come to think of it, what happened to the Incubi?”

“It’s going well. My colleagues and senpai are showing them around town. It seems like what they see is causing them to relax.”

“It’d be great if this could cause them to reduce their forces.”

“Ah, speaking of which, it seems like Kazuma is back in town. Vanir-sama told me when he was back at the shop.”

Oh, so Kazuma is back from his training. I heard that he went out with Sir and Wiz for some exercise, but I wonder how strong he has gotten.

He’s probably hanging around the adventurer’s guild, so I suppose I can buy him a drink and listen to his stories while I’m at it.

“Right, I’m heading back to the guild to ask him about it.”

“Please wait, I’m going with you. I want to hear all about Vanir-sama’s accomplishments too.”

“Couldn’t you just ask Sir directly if you want to know?”

There’s no need to go around him to hear it from Kazuma, right?

“Well, see, Vanir-sama said ‘I’m busy arranging a large business deal, so I don’t have time to concern myself with you’ before chasing me out of the shop. Ah, but his cold attitude is nice, too.”

She really is a diehard fan of Sir to the end, isn’t she?

“A large business deal, huh? Did he find a way to make a large amount of money? I really want to be a part of it, but I suppose I can ask him about it later. You can follow me if you want.”

“Okay, I’ll go with you~.”

With Loli Succubus in tow, I returned to the guild and joined up with my companions.

Lynn was glaring at me, but it seems like her mood is much better than it was before.

“I’m back. I heard Kazuma’s back?”

I avoided meeting Lynn’s gaze and asked Taylor.

“Kazuma just left. It sounded like he exaggerated things, but he really spun an interesting tale about his trip to the dungeon.”

“So I just missed him. Ah, I wanted to share a mug with him while trading stories.”

“That’s a shame. Oh yeah, Kazuma is planning to leave tomorrow, so he asked us to teach him as many skills as possible before he leaves.

It seems like he spoke to pretty much everyone who was here before he left.”

Keith said something strange as he nursed his drink.

“Even if he knows the skills, where is he going to get the skill points from? He couldn’t have leveled up that much.”

“Vanir-san and Wiz-san helped him level up. From what he said, it went really well.”

Lynn joined in the conversation, still sounding somewhat grumpy.

“I heard that Adventurers find it easier to gain experience. Also, they do say that people without talent gain levels more easily.”

Hearing Taylor’s statement, I instantly understood.

By all metrics, Kazuma is by no means talented. His high luck and his ability to pull through at the last moment is remarkable, but his physical attributes just aren’t suited for an adventurer.

That’s why he could level up so quickly.

“But, even if he has gotten stronger, is it really okay?”

I can understand Lynn’s worry.

“Going after Aqua-nee-san means getting close to the Demon King’s castle. If he messes up, he might even end up right inside it.”

I said it jokingly, but knowing Kazuma’s knack for getting into trouble...

Kazuma has already gotten involved with several Generals of the Demon King’s Army on multiple occasions. Considering his luck and his performance so far, it wouldn’t be surprising if he really ended up fighting the Demon King.

“Well, I’ll help him out. It’s just skills, after all. If he wants them, he can have as many as he likes.”

“Yeah. And if a beginner adventurer from Axel really did end up defeating the Demon King, it’d be an unprecedented feat.”

“They could even turn this place into a tourist attraction as the town that raised the hero!”

“Taylor, Keith, you’re being way too optimistic. But, well, it sure would be nice if it did happen.”

My companions looked at each other and shared a laugh.

If Kazuma really did manage to defeat the Demon King, he’d probably be hailed as a hero.

“As his best friend, I’ll support him to the best of my ability. If he really succeeds, I’d be hailed as the good friend of the hero too, right? So everyone would be all over me too!”

“No, no, that’s not happening.” x3

“No one would believe you even if you say you’re the good friend of the hero.”

“Kazuma would just go ‘I don’t know that guy. He’s a stranger.’”

“Yeah, that sounds like him!”

Not just my companions, but the other adventurers in the guild who happened to be listening in joined in as well.

They’re having a blast saying all kinds of bad things about me.

“Hmph, Kazuma isn’t that heartless of a person!”

“But the last time you were arrested for sexual harassment and turned to Kazuma for help, he said you were a stranger, didn’t he?”

“Come to think of it, didn’t he act like you’re a stranger during the trial too?”

Now that they mention it...

“No, no, that’s just him being embarrassed! Isn’t that what friendship between men is all about?”

“Not at all!” x3

“Whoever said that just now, stand right up! I’m going to feed you my iron fists of fury!”

When I woke up, it was morning.

It seemed like I fell asleep on the guild floor. I stretched my stiff body.

I don’t remember too much about the big fight, but it seems like I fell asleep immediately after that.

“How long are you planning to sleep for? Everyone’s already at the meeting point.”

Lynn was looking down at me.

If she was wearing a skirt, this would be the perfect angle, but there’s nothing to get excited about when she’s wearing a pair of shorts.

“What meeting point are you talking about?”

“You really are... Kazuma and the others are boarding a carriage to leave town. Didn’t you say you’ll teach him skills before he leaves?”

“Ah, yeah, come to think of it, I did say that.”

I stood up and picked up the sword that was propped against a nearby wall.

This sword was given to me by Princess Leonor. At first glance, it's just a regular sword, but it is a genuine magic sword.

If I trust what Princess Leonor told me, this sword is worth an untold amount of money.

She gave it to me even knowing that...

"Hey, what are you doing? If you don't hurry, you'll miss Kazuma."

"I know, I know. I'm coming."

I hung my sword on my waist and followed after Lynn.

There already was a crowd of adventurers waiting at the carriage pick-up point. Kazuma, Megumin, and Darkness were there, too.

And with them was Sir Vanir and that giant bird.

They seemed to be talking about something, but they soon wrapped up. I took a step forward as the representative of the adventurers and pulled out my sword.

"—Right, then, Kazuma, are you ready to learn some skills?"

The next step is for all the adventurers present to teach him skills.

"You're heading off to fight the Demon King mano a mano, so it's only right for us to beat you... I mean, properly train you before you go. Think of it as our farewell gift."

"You were about to say beat me senseless, weren't you? And I'm not planning on charging at the Demon King and fighting him one on one! Truth be told, all I really want to do is bring Aqua back!"

Kazuma was desperately denying it, but Megumin and Darkness simply nodded along behind him with wry smiles on their faces. It seems like they fully intend on fighting the Demon King.

Despite his words, I'm still surprised that Kazuma chose to go on such a dangerous journey to retrieve Aqua-nee-san. The other adventurers seem to share similar sentiments.

"Say, Kazuma, maybe it's best if you don't go on this journey."

Suddenly, such worried words came from the crowd.

"I'm glad for your concern, but right now I'm one of the strongest people in this town. Leave Aqua and the Demon King to me, you guys just make sure to protect this town where my mansion is located."

Seeing Kazuma brazen bragging, all the adventurers, me included, tensed up.

This is followed by a storm of insults and complaints.

It's all stuff like "weakling who relied on Vanir and Wiz's power to become strong", or "scumbag who used money to buy power" and other similar sentiments.

"You guys will make a great warm up before I take on the Demon King! Show me all the skills that I haven't learnt yet! My name is Satou Kazuma, I'll take you all on!"

Kazuma's statement pushed everyone present over the edge.

We traded glances, weapons in our hand, and immediately rushed Kazuma all at once.

"...W-What happened here?"

A voice that sounded very much like Wiz's echoed around the carriage pick up point.

I somehow managed to turn to face her, and saw Wiz fumbling with a large package. It seemed like she had something to give to Kazuma and was late because of that.

Well, normal people would be taken aback upon seeing such a sight.

Countless adventurers lay sprawled all over the ground.

After a fierce battle with Kazuma, everyone is laying on the ground, unable to move. Of course, that included Kazuma too.

I admit that I underestimated him as the bearer of the weakest class, but even so, he did pretty well.

Sure, he used all kinds of underhanded tricks, but his growth really surprised me. I can't believe a single adventurer managed to push us this far all by himself.

But don't get the wrong idea.

It's not like Kazuma defeated all of us by himself.

Things only ended up this way because quite a few of us saw how he was about to cry and went easy on him. That's a very important point!

Still, Kazuma should've learnt all kinds of skills from that exchange.

With his current strength and his ability to make snap decisions and his knowledge of underhanded tactics, he might actually give the Demon King a good run for his money.

"Are you taking a nap, Dust-san?"

“If you really think so, you might as well gouge out your eyes and throw them away.”

Loli Succubus crouched down next to my head. Don't take this opportunity when I can't move to poke my cheeks.

“What are you doing here? Did you come to see Kazuma and the others off, too?”

“That's part of it, but I'm mainly here to see you, Dust-san. I happened to be passing by the old man who runs the general store, and he asked me if I could give this to you.”

Saying that, she left a spear in front of me.

I paid a visit to him yesterday, complaining about the poor quality of the spearhead that fell off so easily, and he promised to fix it by tomorrow. I never expected him to really do it.

“All customers who are taking the carriage to Alcanretia, please board immediately.”

Hearing the driver's voice, Kazuma and the others got onto the carriage.

The rest of us gathered by the carriage to see them off.

“Now then, I'll be heading off to bring that idiot back!”

In response to Kazuma's words, the adventurers responded with shouts of encouragement.

Rather than giving him any kind of strange pressure, it sounded just like our usual ribbing.

There is one thing I'm worried about, though. His weapons.

The sword Kazuma had hanging off his waist isn't a bad weapon, but it's just an ordinary sword. It's not really an adequate weapon for someone heading off to fight the Demon King.

I let out a huge sigh and looked down at my waist.

This precious sword has been with me all this time ever since I left that country.

The truth is, this sword has a special ability that I've yet to tell anyone.

If the wielder is attacked by a spell that would cause fatal damage, it has the ability to completely nullify it once, no matter what it is.

Princess Leonor entrusted it to me because she was worried about me after I became an exile.

I was planning to keep it with me for the rest of my life.

But it's not only a protective charm; it's also a chain that ties me back to my home country... To Princess Leonor.

As long as I have this, there's no way I will be able to forget my past as a knight.

"Hey, Kazuma! That sword of yours, it's just an ordinary sword without any sort of magic on it, right!? Just in case, you should take this with you!"

I removed my sword from my waist and tossed it to Kazuma.

"That's technically an enchanted weapon. It isn't a legendary-tier weapon that can only be equipped by a specific class, so even you should be able to make use of it. Just make sure you bring it back to me after you defeat the Demon King!"

I put on a cool front and grinned at him, and Kazuma responded with a look of surprise.



It seems like he finally realized how manly I am.

Lynn stared at our exchange from the side, before something sparked in her eye and a mischievous grin came over her face.

“Oh, I see. In the one in a million chance that Kazuma actually defeats the Demon King, that sword would become known as the sword wielded by the hero, and be worth a whole lot more. Kazuma, I’m pretty sure Dust picked up that sword from the body of a fallen adventurer he ran across in a dungeon, so there’s no need to give it back~.”

“Dammit, Lynn, how could you ruin my get rich quick plan!?”

I pretended to be angry and chased after Lynn. While we were running around, Kazuma’s carriage departed.

Naturally, we stopped and turned to look at the carriage as it went off into the distance.

“Was it really okay? Isn’t it an important item you got from the Princess?”

Lynn stared at me with a serious look that was at complete odds with how she was just a moment ago.

She knew how important that sword was to me and still went along with my story. I’ll have to thank her later.

Thank you for everything you’ve done, my partner. Please protect my friend.

“It’s fine, I have this spear. Plus... I don’t need that sword anymore.”

Now that I've cut ties with Princess Leonor... with my past, it's no longer of any use to me.

I'm sure it'd be more useful with Kazuma than with me.

"If he really did defeat the Demon King and bring that sword back, I'd be sure to make a fortune."

"Defeating the Demon King sounds like some far-fetched story, but for some reason, I really feel that Kazuma and the others might actually do it."

"He's my best friend, after all. Now then, it wouldn't be much of a funny joke if he defeated the Demon King only to come back home to a pile of rubble. We should do our best, too."

We don't have time to worry about him now.

The Demon King's Army would be attacking Axel within a few days. We need to clear our mind and make ready to intercept them.

Earlier, when Kazuma and Wiz were talking, I overheard them saying that Sir Vanir and Wiz will lend their power to the defence of the town.

This would greatly increase our strength, but it's far from a sure-fire thing.

There's a limit as to how many levels the adventurers in town can gain in a few days, and I can't expect them to get dramatically stronger in such a short amount of time.

Now, then, what should we do...

Chapter 2



THE BATTLE AT AXEL



The Battle At Axel

Part 1

After parting ways with Lynn, I took Faitfore for a walk around the town while thinking about its defence.

The town of Axel is surrounded by walls, so it's a fairly formidable defensive structure.

The Demon King's army would most likely attack from the direction of the main gate. There is a wide plain in front of it, which makes it perfect for maneuvering a large army.

I looked up to the main gate and the towering walls ahead of me.

These thick walls will be the cornerstone of our defence.

Plus, thanks to Aqua-nee-chan destroying the walls with her flood, the walls near the main gate are all brand new, so there's no need to worry about lack of maintenance or poor quality.

...Is this what they call a blessing in disguise?

Hiding behind the walls is also an option, but that's only really done when friendly reinforcements are on the way.

The main body of the Demon King's Army will be attacking the Capital of Belzerg at the same time, so I doubt we can expect any reinforcements.

That leaves us no choice but to meet them at the front gates.

Will we be able to face off against the Demon King's Army without losing heart? The psychological front would play a huge role in the outcome of the battle.

While I was thinking about that, I somehow ended up outside of the city.

"Hmm, I might as well swing by the warehouse."

Actually, I have a small warehouse a short distance outside of town where I store my worthless junk, scamming tools, and other stuff that can't be seen by others.

It was the same place that I hid that Mi... Whatever-his-name-was's magic sword back then.

There's a small rock in the forest that, if shifted, would reveal a staircase leading underground. It was given to me by an old client in lieu of payment.

Apparently, the client's deceased husband had been using it as a hidden basement.

I unlocked the door, and inside was a fairly large space with a handmade bookshelf pushed up against one wall. Apart from that,

there were a stack of cheap pots lying around and a stamp with Sir Vanir's face on it.

"Dust, is there anything to eat?"

"Unfortunately not. Oh, no, that book isn't for children to read."

I snatched the book that Faitfore removed from the bookshelf out of her hands before she could read it.

These books are the porn books that I discovered in a hidden room in a dungeon. They were written in a language that no one could read but Kazuma.

Apparently, they are written in the language of his homeland. I gave him a few of the books in return for translating some that I really liked.

Before putting it back on the bookcase, I flipped through it. Yeah, it really is amazing.

"Damn, it really is erotic. These situations are really novel. Where do they even come up with the idea of a drug that increases your sensitivity? I don't think I've encountered such a thing even in the dreams of the Succubus shop."

I was planning to put them away, but once I opened it, I couldn't stop myself from reading.

"Hey, Dust, I'm hungry. Let's go back."

"I'm at a very good spot right now, so wait a while... Okay, okay, I get it. I get it, so stop biting me!"

I pulled Faitfore off my leg before slipping the book into my back pocket. I'll finish reading it back in my room.

As I carried Faitfore who was too hungry to move, something occurred to me, so I asked.

“Say, is there anything that will make you give it your all when you fight against the enemy?”

“If I can eat a lot of delicious food afterwards.”

Faitfore instantly answered with the usual expressionless face.

I was the one who asked, but honestly I’ve already guessed her answer.

“Yeah, having a reward waiting for you at the end makes you motivated.”

In that case, how should I motivate the other adventurers?

A reward... Well, it’d have to be that, right?

In order to carry out the plan I just thought of, I headed over to a certain place.

I returned back to the Adventurer’s Guild just as the sun was starting to set and found that most of the adventurers in town were already inside.

They are all worried, after all, so perhaps they felt more secure staying in the same place where most of their companions are.

I walked towards a group of male adventurers drinking near the entrance and joined them.

“Sup? You guys drinking?”

“Oh, Dust. I’m not paying for your drinks, so go somewhere else.”

“Hey, hey, aren’t you being a little too cold? And here I was bearing some good news for once.”

I put my hand on the shoulder of the man who tried to shoo me away and said with a smile.

“Yeah, right, I bet you just want me to take part in your newest ‘get rich quick’ scheme or a scam. I won’t be tricked again!”

“Oh, is that so? Well, the Succubi asked me to deliver a message to you, but if you insist, then I’ll just have to enjoy it by myself.”

Just as I was about to leave, one of them stopped me by grabbing my shoulder.

I turned back with an annoyed look, only to see all of them leaning over and giving me looks of rapt attention.

Yep, they bought it hook, line, and sinker.

“No, go ahead. It wouldn’t do any harm to hear you out.”

“Nah, if you don’t want to hear it, I won’t force it on you. Didn’t you try to shoo me away earlier?”

“Sorry, that was my bad. Waitress, one mug here please. This one is on me.”

I put on an act of being happy that I got a free drink and leaned in close to them.

“You see, the Succubi are willing to grant one free dream tonight to all the adventurers who are planning to protect this town as thanks.”

“Really!? You should’ve said so sooner. I just remembered an urgent errand I needed to do, so go ahead and help yourself to my untouched food.”

The people at the table hurriedly stood up and exited the guild.

Fatefore let herself off from my back and happily helped herself to the food that they left behind.

I saved money on food, so it really is a win-win situation.

“Let’s move on to the next one once you’re done with that.”

“Okay.”

I visited the other tables in a similar fashion.

A short while later, most of the guys in the tavern have vanished off to someplace else.

Having completed my mission, I went over to join my companions as our usual table.

“What were you doing? It seems like everyone you talked to all left the guild.”

“I just told them a little bit of juicy information”

“What’s with that. Tell me about it later, okay?”

“Oh, sure. I was planning to tell you anyways.”

Keith seems really interested in it, but Taylor is still as stone faced as ever. This guy should really learn to take it easy from time to time.

“Why are you keeping it amongst the guys? Is it something you can’t tell me?”

“Ah, well, it’s not particularly juicy to women.”

“Oh, I see. I bet it’s something perverted again. Ugh, I can’t stand you guys.”

It seemed like Lynn got the gist of it with just that bit of information.

There's no way I can tell Lynn about it. There's no telling what she will do if she finds out.

After I managed to pacify Lynn somewhat with food, Lynn took Faitfore back to the hotel.

The two of them weren't particularly close when they first met, but they've been spending more and more time together as of late. Well, I'm thankful that she's taking care of her at night.

"So, what was that juicy piece of information you were talking about?"

As soon as Lynn was gone, Keith whispered to me.

"It's not going to be anything decent, so I'll be heading back first."

Taylor left the money for his food on the table before leaving.

"Taylor's the same as usual, huh. Alright, then, guess I'm going together with you."

I happily grabbed Keith by the shoulders and started shepherding him to a certain place, which is of course, the Succubus shop.

After all my efforts, the Succubus shop was packed to the brim when I arrived.

"We'll be offering a special service today. For just today, we'll give you a dream several times more intense than usual for free, so go ahead and tell us all your desires."

The Succubus managed explained with erotic motions.

A bunch of heavily breathing men took this chance to fill out their forms with their desires and handed them over to the waiting Succubi with red faces.

“So this is it?! Is it really free? I’m running low on money right now, so this is really great!”

Keith excitedly sat up in his seat and looked at the order form in front of him.

As I stood by the wall observing this scene, Loli Succubus slid up to me.

“I know it isn’t right for a Succubus like me to be saying such things, but men really are simple creatures, aren’t they?”

“Lust is the source of all male behaviour.”

Loli Succubus gave me a wry smile at my declaration.

“But is it really okay to give them that kind of dream?”

Loli Succubus stood on her tiptoes in order to whisper into my ear, keeping it from the others.

“It’s fine. The purpose of this exercise is not to let them vent their pent up desires, but motivate them to give it their all.”

“I understand that, but I still have to wonder if that’s really okay...”

She still seems to have some doubts, as she frowned and tilted her head.

“You’ve been asking me for advice on creating lewd dreams, right? I don’t think any of them have experienced such a development before.”

“That’s true, but... I still feel a little guilty... “

Don't get cold feet at such a late juncture.

I talked to the other Succubi, so the plan should go off without a hitch.

As I looked upon the excited adventurers, the edges of my mouth couldn't help but curl.

"Heh heh heh..."

"Dust-san, you have a really wicked look on your face right now..."

Oops, my good mood showed up on my face.

I can't wait to see these innocently smiling and blushing faces afterwards.

Part 2

The next day, after I wrapped up training with Taylor and Keith, I headed over to the Succubus shop to check things out.

“Don’t tease me like that! You’ll be giving me the rest of the dream tonight, right!? My beloved Serena-san will be saved after being captured by the orcs, right!?”

“Why did I wake up in the middle of a date!? Hurry up and show me the continuation!”

“Hey, what happens next? I don’t mind if you have to tell me verbally, just please tell me!”

The shop was crammed full of adventurers, each of whom were pestering the Succubi with questions.

“Please continue” was the word on everyone’s lips.

“H-Hey, Dust-san!”

Upon noticing me, Loli Succubus urgently tugged on my sleeve and brought me to a corner of the room.

“Seems like it was a huge success.”

“All thanks to you... Like hell it is! I’ve had customers coming in since early in the morning, all demanding for us to show them the rest of the story!”

Loli Succubus seemed overwhelmed by the unexpected reaction, but this was something I anticipated, so all I could do was grin.

“Wasn’t it groundbreaking? The idea of serialized erotic dreams.”

“I’ll agree on that. The purpose of the dream is to give the customer satisfaction, so we normally give them the whole experience in a

single dream. I would never have thought about cutting it off just as things are starting to get good.”

Indeed, I set it up such that their dreams would end just before they would reach their climax.

“Still, it worked really well, didn’t it? This book is really amazing.”

Loli Succubus produced a single book from her pocket.

I loaned the Succubi a large amount of porn books from my stash. That book is one of them.

It seems like these books are commonly sold in Kazuma’s home country.

“My country is pretty focused when it comes to the subject of porn. No matter how deviant or intense your desires, we will have something out there for them. Sometimes other countries even refer to us as perverts.”

Or so he says. Even though it’s just a painting, it’s erotic and sexy. Kazuma’s translations leave some parts unclear, but even so, they still speak to me on a fundamental level.

I chose a few of the books that these bastards would like, and had the Succubi recreate them in their dreams, which eventually resulted in this situation.

“I’m sure you already know, but make sure to continue the dream tonight. It’d be meaningless if they don’t get hooked onto it.”

“I’m kinda afraid that they’ll cause a riot if it continues like this...”

You’ll just have to carefully step around them to make sure that doesn’t happen.

“And, there’s another thing that worries me. A few of the customers want to see the continuation as soon as possible, so they are begging us to visit them when they are taking a nap. It’s a real headache.”

“That’s within my expectations. I don’t think I’ve told you yet, but I’ve already told the other Succubi how to deal with those customers. Here.”

I pointed to a nearby adventurer who was talking to a Succubi.

Loli Succubus immediately got my meaning, and perked up her ears to listen.

“I’ll go take a nap in the stable right now, so please give me the rest of the dream. I woke up just as my honey was about to be taken to the goblin’s cave, and I really can’t continue without knowing what happens next!”

“Dear customer, please raise your head. I’m terribly sorry, but that is impossible. The powers of a Succubi are weakened during the day. Plus, even if you were to fall asleep now, you’d sleep way too shallowly, and most likely, you’ll wake up in the middle of my dream.”

“N-No...”

He slumped his shoulders in a depressed manner.

I understand how he’s feeling. Those porn books tend to have a lot of interesting stories, and I’ve spent many a sleepless night reading them from cover to cover. It’s not unexpected for someone to react that way when it is cut off in the middle.

...Well, I was the one who set it up that way, though.

“Those books you gave us were really interesting.”

“Hey, I didn’t give them to you. It’s just a loan. Don’t forget that. I’ll need them back after everything’s done.”

“...Leaving that aside, for us Succubi, books that are both erotic and interesting are the greatest forms of entertainment. Everyone’s so engrossed with it, they are reading them even when it doesn’t have anything to do with their job.”

For a race of creatures whose job is to dress up erotically and give erotic dreams, those books must be irresistible. Getting addicted to them is only natural.

We’ll keep stalling their dreams like this and raise their expectations higher and higher.

While we were talking, the other adventurers continued pestering the Succubi.

“I can’t do anything about the dreams right now, but we’ve prepared a special present for everyone who’s taking part in the town’s defence.”

“Really? What are you offering?”

“The top performing adventurer will be given, behold, a free pass to our store valid for an entire year.”

“Uwooooooh! I’ll have to do my best!”

With that one sentence, the grumbling and complaints that have been the norm so far were blown away in an instant, replaced with an enthusiastic shout.

“Now, in order to confirm your current level and experience points, may we inspect your adventurer’s card?”

“Eh? Not just before the Demon King’s army arrives, but now?”

“Yes, right now. We would like to compare your current experience points with how it is after the Demon King’s army is defeated. Would it be a problem?”

“Not at all! Go ahead and write it down or do anything else you need.”

Loli Succubus, who had been watching the exchange up till now, placed a hand on her chin and seemed to fall into deep thought.

“Um, if we check the cards now, wouldn’t some of them try to cheat? Like defeating monsters to raise their level before the Demon King’s Army arrive?”

“I’m sure some people would do that.”

“Isn’t that bad? Cheating is no good.”

Loli Succubus placed her hands on her hips and puffed up her cheeks. Even though you’re a devil, cheating is still no good?

“It’s fine. Have you forgotten what we’re doing this for? We’re resorting to all these tricks to motivate them and raise our combat power as much as possible. If this would motivate them to seriously try and raise their levels, then that is mission accomplished.”

“I see. Making them excited to see the continuation of their dream to get them to exercise their bodies in order to get a good night’s sleep. On top of that, dangling this reward in front of them in order to encourage them to level up... That’s so sly, it’s scary.”

“Can’t you just honestly praise me? Call me a tactician.”

Shouldn’t she be getting impressed by my intelligence right now? Why is she slowly inching away?

With this, we've raised both their morale and their levels. We might be able to make it out of this after all.

"By the way, what happened to those Incubi?"

"We took them to some places that were of no importance, then we took them to this shop, and they said something like 'If all the adventurers were such spineless weaklings, this battle would be a cinch'. Before they left, we told them that we would sap their morale before they attacked, and they actually believed us."

"Not bad. I always knew you had it in you."

"Heheh, it's not a big deal~."

She says that, but her face is all but saying "Please praise me more."

That face is a little annoying, but I do need the Succubi to give it their all, so I suppose I'll play along for now.

"Yo, the number one sharpest Succubus in town! Your body is slim in all the places that matter."

"Oh, Dust-san, you're such a charmer... Eh?"

I heaped on the praise onto Loli Succubus and left before she could notice anything off about my words.

It'd be nice if we could catch the Demon King's Army off guard and inspire the adventurers to greater heights this way...

Part 3

Two days after that, I was a short distance away from town, scouting from the air.

“Why do I have to take a man with me for a walk in the sky. It’s a pain in the ass. Come on, get off.”

“If I fall from this height, I’ll die! Don’t think you’re the only one suffering here, I don’t want to be up here with you either. But there’s no one else who can handle Faitfore, so what choice do I have? And I’m the only one who has the Farsight skill in town. Don’t think you’re the only one unhappy with that.”

Keith was fearfully clinging onto my waist as he peered at the ground, but it seems like he still had the presence of mind to talk back to me.

If I had to do this, I would’ve preferred to take a ride with Lynn, but we needed Keith’s skill, so I had no choice.

With this, Taylor is the only one of my companions who has to take a ride on Faitfore. He was really staring at us when we took off.

“So Keith can take a ride. No, It’s nothing.”

He said under his breath, and I managed to catch it. Oh well, I guess I’ll give him a ride next time.

Though, he’s a pretty solidly built guy, so hopefully he wouldn’t earn Faitfore’s displeasure.

“Still, that Faitfore turned out to be a white dragon is surprising and all, but I would’ve never expected you to be that rumoured Dragon Knight. Even after witnessing all this, I still can’t believe it.”

Don't stare at me like that. Having a man stare at me doesn't do anything for me.

"Ah, didn't you notice the genius aura coming out from me?"

"The only aura you have is a dark and dirty one. Oh, I think I can see something down there."

I was about to start an argument with Keith, but he suddenly fell silent and looked down with a serious look.

I followed his gaze and saw multiple small dots on the surface.

"Should I go a little lower?"

"It's fine. My Farsight can... Oh. Oh wow, this might be pretty tough."

Keith started mumbling to himself after seeing what it is, but I couldn't get any proper information out of him at all.

"Hey, explain it to me in a way I can understand."

"Ah, sorry. Those are the monsters from the Demon King's army. There's too many of them for me to get an accurate count, but it looks to be about four to five times larger than the numbers the guild anticipated."

Even after they've gotten the false information from the Incubi, they still sent such a large force our way. I don't know if it is because the enemy commander is really cautious, or if they originally sent such a huge force in the first place.

"Hey, hey, seriously? Why are you sending such a large force to deal with a town of beginners? That's really immature. Can you tell the makeup of the monsters?"

"Hmm, most of them seem to be Skeletons. The others seem to be Kobolds, Goblins, and a bunch of other races. The line is too long, so I

can't really make out the guys in the back. It seems like most of them are made out of relatively intelligent, bipedal monsters. They aren't moving particularly fast, but at this rate, they should be in front of Axel by noon tomorrow."

Just one day's grace, huh?

I really want to fly lower and gather more information, but it'd be problematic if we are discovered.

"If Megumin was here, I bet she'd be able to destroy a good half of them with her Explosion Magic. Ah, why does she have to be away during such a critical time?"

"This is the perfect situation for her excessive firepower. If she knew about this, I bet she'd be very upset."

If the Explosion Girl was here, she would've definitely happily started blasting away with her Explosion.

It's useless to pine for someone who isn't here, but still.

"There's no one else who can use Explosion... Ah, wait, there is one! There is one other person who can use Explosion!"

I shouted, and Keith seemed to immediately get who I was talking about.

"Wiz!" x2

Having come to an agreement, I turned Faitfore around and headed right back to Axel.

"Umm, I really want to help you guys, but I'm a Demon King's General, so I can't do anything that will stand out. I'm sorry."

The first thing I did upon entering the magic item shop was to ask Wiz to lend us her Explosion magic, but she apologized to me instead.

“Wait a minute. Isn’t Sir a General, too?”

“What are you saying, penniless customer? What that useless shopkeeper said is no mistake. She’s technically a General of the Demon King. On top of that, she’s not a human, but a lich.”

Hearing Sir so easily reveal Wiz’s true nature, I couldn’t help but doubt my own ears.

Being a Demon King’s General is surprising in itself, but more importantly, a Lich is that creature that’s hailed as the king of undead monsters, right?

“You’re lying, right? And here I thought you were a quiet beauty, one of the few level-headed people in this town who’d probably let me fondle her breasts if I prostrate myself before her hard enough! Dammit, I’ve been tricked!”

I never suspected that a spy of the Demon King could be this close to me.

“T-That’s not true! I’ve only been asked to maintain the barrier on the Demon King’s castle, I’m completely uninvolved in the fighting. So, I have no hostile intentions... Eh, wait, do I really look like a fragile woman who’d easily cave in like that!?”

Wiz was halfway through her anxious denial before her mood suddenly soured.

Now that we know that Wiz is a General of the Demon King’s Army, can I still take her word for it?

“However you look at it, you are a left-on-the-shelf lonely undead who gets full of herself the moment you receive a little bit of praise. Delinquent, there’s no need to worry, there’s no falsehood in her words. She only became a General after agreeing not to interfere with the Demon King.”

Sir Vanir said as he tidied up the shelves, not even turning back once.

Wiz’s true colours and what Sir just said was concerning, but what really drew my attention right now is Sir’s current outfit.

Instead of his usual suit, he was wearing shorts, slippers, and a close fitting shirt. Together with that mask of his, he looks just like the definition of a suspicious person.

I’m at a loss if I should say something or not.

But it feels like the conversation will head off in a strange direction if I ask now, so I decided to keep silent about it for now.

“If you say so, Sir, I’ll have to trust you.”

“Aww, I’ve always wanted to ride a white dragon. I don’t suppose you can give me a ride later?”

“I think it’s fine. Right, Faitfore?”

“Yeah. she always gives me sweets every time, so it’s fine.”

“Fufu, thank you. You can come over to play anytime you want.”

Faitfore nodded without hesitation, still enjoying the tea and snacks.

Seems like Sir and Wiz have her wrapped completely around their finger.

“You wish to ride her? Hmm, wouldn’t that be impossible?”

“Vanir-san, why? You’re not going to tell a lady like me that I’m over the weight limit, are you? I haven’t been taking in much sugar lately, so it should be fine.”

“It’s not a matter of weight. White dragons are strongly associated with the holy attribute. It’s fine when she’s in her human form, but her body will be infused with holy energy when she’s a dragon. Now, then, what attribute is your body again, malnourished shopkeeper?”

“Ah.”

“Liches are undead, right? That means she’s weak to the holy element. Come to think of it, Loli Succubus was saying something about her butt hurting after she rode it.”

“That applies to devils, too. As for undead, you wouldn’t just get away with a little bit of pain. If you stay in contact with her for too long, your existence might disappear altogether. If you are fine with that, then go right ahead.”

“I’ll respectfully decline... We can’t do anything overt, but Vanir-san and I will still assist in the defence of the town, so please be at ease.”

I was relieved slightly to hear that.

“By the way, Moi am no longer part of the Demon King’s army. After losing one of my lives, my arrangement with the Demon King is considered null and void. Therefore, there’s no reason for me to support the Demon King or his army in their efforts.”

So that means that Sir is free to go wild. That’s good news!

“If humans were to be wiped out, Moi would no longer be able to enjoy delicious dark emotions, so there’s no reasons for us to be enemies. Plus, Moi still requires that little brat to continue earning money for me, and it’d be a headache if his mansion in this town

were to be destroyed. That said, protecting this town for free would be unbecoming of me as both a devil and a businessman.”

“Can we put it on my tab? I don’t have any money on hand right now.”

“You are always broke, are you not? No, it’s fine. This is an emergency situation, after all. Just remember to pay me back later.”

It’s a pity we couldn’t reduce their numbers with Explosion immediately, but the fact that both of them will help us instead of the Demon King’s army is good enough for now.

After leaving the Magic item shop, I headed over to the Adventurer’s Guild, and discovered that it was far noisier than usual.

The waitresses were in a flurry of activity, ferrying food and drinks from table to table.

“Say, why is it so rowdy today?”

I sat down next to my companions and asked. For some reason, Loli Succubus was also seated there, but she has been spending more and more time around us as of late, so I didn’t pay it much mind.

Faitfore untied herself from my back and settled down into a seat next to me, before starting to browse a menu.

“What else? I told Luna about the Demon King’s army’s movements, and then the news was spread to everyone, and this is the result. The guild tavern also offered a half price discount for tonight, so everyone’s busy drinking and partying.”

Keith explained to me as he helped himself to a more extravagant dinner than usual, his face already red from alcohol.

I see, getting everyone's mood up for tomorrow's battle, eh?

"Then, can I eat twice as much as normal?"

Faitfore immediately reacted to the word "half price", staring up at me with upturned eyes.

"Yeah, sure. It'll get busy tomorrow, so eat your fill and have a good night's sleep."

"Yes, I'll do my best."

The way she was eyeing the menu as she ordered her food made me worry a little, but I think I'll ignore it for now.

"Now, then, I'll have a full meal myself. I really want to go to a better restaurant and have pretty girls serve me... But I think it's still impossible."

Just getting close to a modestly well endowed waitress put my body on edge.

"Hey, now, you're not still traumatized by orcs, are you? Ahh, how pitiful."

Keith shrugged his shoulders and snickered.

This guy... I really should teach him a lesson.

"It's your fault for throwing me into that situation in the first place! I demand compensation! What are you going to do if I get a phobia of women because of this!? If I say goodbye to sex at such a young age, what else do I have to look forward to!?"

"You should just live your life properly. But, fine, I do feel bad about it, so I'll pour you a drink at least."

"Okay, fine, I'll give you some service too. Here, say ahh~."

“Faitfore will do it too.”

Ooh, Lynn poured me some beer, Loli Succubus brought the food to my mouth, and Faitfore pushed one of her dishes over to me.

Well, if they are going to go that far, I suppose I can forgive them.

“Dust, you seem to be in a better mood. But, didn’t you have a phobia of women? So why are you fine with those three? Just what is different between them... Ah. Ahem. I see. Sorry, pretend I didn’t say anything.”

In the middle of his sentence, Tyler made a sudden realization and coughed before looking away.

I immediately picked up on exactly what he noticed, but I know full well what kind of bad results would happen if I pointed it out, so I kept quiet.

Actually, I’ve already made a mistake in front of Lynn. There’s no way I’m going to repeat the same mistake.

But the drunk who couldn’t read the mood clapped his hands together in realization and said with a drunken slur.

“Oh, I see, they don’t have breasts like orcs, so they don’t feel like women to you, huh!? Fuhahaha, I get you.”

Keith broke out into raucous laughter.

Conversely, the expressions of Lynn and Loli Succubus turned completely dark. As for Faitfore, she doesn’t seem to understand the situation at all and dumbly looked between the two of them.

“Oh, hey, what’s going on? Hey, now, I’m still drinking my beer, so don’t suddenly pull me up like that? What, are you afraid to go to the toilet by yourself? What’s with those scary expressions of yours?”

Lynn and Loli Succubus silently grabbed him by the arm and dragged him outside.

“Seems like we’ll be losing one of our numbers tonight...”

“It can’t be helped, Keith brought it upon himself.”

Loud flashes of magic and the screams of a certain man came in from outside the guild, but Taylor and I shut our eyes, covered our ears, and pretended not to notice.

After a short time, the two of them returned back to the tavern with a much brighter expression on their face. Keith is nowhere to be found, but it’s best not to question that.

“You two should stop doing stupid things and hurry up and get some rest. Tomorrow will be a busy day.”

“I know. Everyone will be busy tomorrow. This could be my last meal for all I know, so I’m going to eat as much as I want.”

My declaration came out at the worst time, just as the guild happened to be quieter than usual.

As a result, everyone in the room fell silent.

“...Hey, don’t just stay silent.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me! We’ve been careful not to speak of that for this entire night, and you just have to say it out loud!”

“Learn to read the atmosphere, man! This is why you’re so unpopular!”

“Men who can’t tell the difference between what they can say and what they can’t are the worst!”

The adventurers around me bombarded me with vicious words.

“You bastards sure love to shoot your mouth off! I was trying to leave it be... Ouch! Who was it who tossed that dish at me! Fine, I can’t take it anymore! Let’s fight it out right here, all you small fry who wouldn’t even make a good warmup, bring it on!”

“Kill him!” x5

The people who were provoked by me charged at me all at once. I took my spear with the tip securely in it’s sheath into my hands and charged straight into the fray.

Part 4

When I came to, I found myself on the floor of the guild.

“Why does it feel like this happened to me before...”

Looking around, I noticed the sleeping bodies of several adventurers around me. Did everyone collapse out of exhaustion after the great fight?

I tried to raise my upper body, but my arm felt oddly heavy. I turned down to look, only to see Faitfore sleeping soundly, using my right arm like a pillow.

I don't feel like waking her up now, so I carefully slipped my arm out of her grasp.

It's still dark outside. Doesn't seem like dawn has broken yet.

On closer inspection, Keith and Taylor were also asleep by the door. Only Lynn is nowhere to be found.

The people I was fighting with were sprawled out across the guild floor, sleeping soundly. I had the urge to stomp on their faces, but I held that urge back as I left the guild.

“Brr, it's cold.”

From the position of the stars and the colour of the sky, it should be getting close to dawn.

As I made my way over to the main gates, I spotted a familiar looking figure staring at the walls.

“What are you doing up so early? Heading to the bathroom? Need me to go with you?”

“You know... Can't you say something better as a greeting?”

Lynn looked over with an exasperated look.

Normally she would've scolded me more severely or started blasting magic at me... She's surprisingly level-headed today.

After letting out a sigh, she turned around, placed her hands behind her back, and started walking along the wall.

I silently followed after her.

"Everyone seems much more refreshed after duking it out with you. They looked so uneasy beforehand, but now they're all sleeping soundly."

"Seeing them sleep without a care in the world really makes me want to drive a foot into their face, right?"

"Of course not... Did you say all that on purpose to make everyone feel better?"

She suddenly turned around and stared at me with upturned eyes.

My face blushed by reflex upon seeing the closeness of her face. The surroundings are dark, so she didn't notice that, right?

"Of course not. They are just getting upset over nothing. They also pissed me off a little, so I just went all out for a bit."

"Oh? Well, fine, if you put it that way, I'll leave it be. Things did work out in the end, so I suppose I'll praise you a little."

Lynn flicked my forehead with her finger before jumping back, hopping on one leg.

That gesture was so cute that I couldn't help but be fascinated for a bit.

“Anyway, how are you holding up? You seem to be caring a lot about other people as of late.”

“Me? I’m at the top of my game, obviously. I’m in tip-top shape today too. If you want, we could head to that alley and test it out.”

“Ahahaha, do you really want me to cut it off?”

“It’s a joke! Don’t brandish your dagger at me!”

Remembering what happened in the stable that one time made a certain part of me shrink.

“A lot of things happened when we first met, didn’t it? You almost died in that field—”

“I didn’t die! I came in to save you guys when you were in a pinch, remember!?”

“Is that so? I don’t remember anything like that.”

She says that, but she’s grinning all the way. She most definitely remembered it.

From that day onwards, we’ve met almost every day... Well, I did spend quite a bit of time in the cells, but we’ve been together ever since.

To be honest, it is true that I kept seeing Princess Leonor in Lynn’s face and projecting that image of the princess over her.

However, I don’t know exactly when, but somewhere along the way, I stopped seeing Lynn as a substitute for the Princess and began seeing her as her own person, and soon I couldn’t tear my eyes away from her.

Her personality, her way of speaking, and her little gestures captivated me.

When I was by her side, I didn't need to be the straight laced knight Rein Shaker, but the freedom-loving adventurer Dust. That above all else put me at ease... And made me really happy.

"No matter what happens, I will definitely protect you."

I took a deep breath and uttered those words.

Lynn's eyes widened, and she stared at me for a while before letting out a small "pfft."

"Ahahahaha, what are you saying? It doesn't suit you one bit. But, well, I guess I'll look forward to it."

"Tsk, is it really that funny?"

I looked away from Lynn as she wiped the tears from her eyes and sulkily kicked the ground.

I genuinely said it, but she took it as a joke... I now understand the importance of acting like a good person on a daily basis.

"Oh, come on, don't sulk. I'll give you a little advance payment for protecting me."

"Ah~, what...!?"

Lynn suddenly brought her face close to mine and brushed my cheek with her lips.

It's not mouth to mouth, but it's the second kiss of my life.

"Eh, ah, L-Lynn!?"

I was too taken aback by this unexpected action that my words couldn't flow properly.

"You're a little more motivated now, right?"

The sun began to rise behind Lynn as she gave me an unblemished smile.

It was the same smile that mesmerised me a long time ago.

Ah, I see. I was defeated by this smile.

“Of course! Just wait to see my accomplishments!”

The adventurers were lined up in front of the plains a short distance away from the main gates.

All the adventurers in town were present.

Most of them were familiar, though every so often I would catch a glimpse of a new face.

Those were the people the guilds of the other cities sent our way as reinforcements and any friends that the adventurers managed to call upon.

Normally, when a town is about to be attacked by the Demon King, a far larger contingent of adventurers would gather to defend it, along with a large portion of the country’s soldiers, but as the rumours suggest, the Demon King’s army is also attacking the capital at the same time.

Between the town of beginner adventurers and the capital of the nation... It’s obvious which one would receive greater priority.

In other words, we won’t be receiving any more reinforcements.

“Still, it’s an impressive sight, this many adventurers gathered together.”

Keith, who climbed up a tree in order to take count of our forces, quickly realized that there were too many of them to count and crossed his arms in admiration.

“I might get some anger saying this, but I feared that there would be quite a few adventurers who’d flee before today. However, not a single one has fled. The noble spirit of those who stayed in town to guard Axel and the weak really touched me!”

Taylor said through tearful eyes, but most of them didn’t stay behind for such a noble reason. Taking a good look at their lust-filled eyes could tell you that.

“If you achieve great things in this battle, I could win a free ticket for the entire year! With that, even if I don’t have a girlfriend, I wouldn’t have to fear doing that alone in the stable!”

“I’ll definitely make it back alive... There’s no way I will die without seeing the continuation of that scene in my dream! I can’t believe I woke up just as my lover was about to be attacked! This is the greatest mistake of my life!”

“I still can’t believe it... I can’t believe I had such a kink... What was that joy I felt in the middle of humiliation and anxiety? I swear I won’t die until I figure it out!”

That’s what the guys who were breathing heavily were saying.

Lust sure is a great motivator, huh? I was the one who stroked their desires like this, but maybe I might have overdid it a little.

And, with all respects to Taylor, but I don’t think the people in town could really be considered weak.

“Everyone, do your best~! I’ll be giving everyone some freebies once the battle is over~!”

The ones who were gathered in front of the gate and offering encouragement in a high pitched voice are the Succubi.

They were dressed much more modestly than back in the store, but even so, they extruded an aura of unmistakable eroticism.

The guys up front immediately softened upon hearing those voices. What an easy bunch to understand. Well, I don't dislike such people.

The male adventurers are full of motivation, and as for the female adventurers, they were also full of fighting spirit.

Of course, I had a plan to motivate the female adventurers as well. The reason the female adventurers are so motivated is because of the rumors I put out these past few days.

Adventurers are predominantly male. It is an occupation that involves frequent combat with dangerous monsters, so of course males would have an advantage with their stronger bodies.

However, magic and skills can bridge the gap in physical abilities, so there are quite a few female adventurers who are stronger than any male.

Kazuma's party, though a bit of a mess overall, are near unbeatable in their field of specialization.

That said, the job of an adventurer is still thought of as being cruel and dirty, and is definitely still thought of as being a job for men.

Parties with three women like Kazuma's are the exceptions amongst exceptions, and even having just one woman in the party like we do attracts much jealousy from the other adventurers.

However, in this town of beginners, the number of female adventurers is far higher than that of other towns. It is a much

romanticised job, after all, and both sexes are equally prone to dreaming of striking it rich.

That's why I spread a certain rumor around in order to motivate the female adventurers.

"This is just between us, so don't spread it too far, alright? Do you know that Kazuma is looking for a wife?"

"Wait, hold on, tell me more."

I slid my way into a group of women having a drink, and they almost chased me away with a disgusted look on their face, but all that disappeared the moment I brought up the subject.

"He's been saying that he wants to quit the dangerous job of an adventurer and hole up for the rest of his life, hasn't he?"

"He does say that whenever he gets drunk, yeah."

The others nodded in agreement.

"So I heard he's planning to retire for good after defeating the Demon King, and he looks forward to living a slow and peaceful life. He's set away quite a large sum of money, so I'm sure he won't be troubled by money for the rest of his life. I really envy him."

"The bounty for defeating even one Demon King's General is pretty large..."

"And, you know, he paid the cost of rebuilding the entire wall that Aqua-san destroyed up front..."

"I heard he made a fortune with that shady masked man who works at the magic item shop..."

The female adventurers huddled together and started whispering amongst themselves.

Looks like all I need is a little push and they'll take the bait.

"But Kazuma already has those three with him. If he wants a wife, he'll probably pick from one of them, right?"

Well, anyone who sees how the four of them interact on a daily basis would surely think that.

"Hey, now, you've got to be kidding. Think about it, one of them is a little brat with a head full of nothing but Explosions. The other one has a nice body and high status, but she's a perverted crusader. And the last one is an Archpriest of the Axis Cult. The only thing she does is party at the bar and rack up debts. If you were in Kazuma's position, would you really want to marry them?"

"...No way."

All of them seem to have come to the same conclusion.

In truth, Kazuma and Megumin seem to be awfully close lately, but I don't know any details about that.

"So, think about it, if Kazuma triumphantly returns after defeating the Demon King, wouldn't it be nice if he could fall into the gentle arms of a motherly woman after such a physically and mentally grueling battle?"

"Those three are all beautiful, but considering their personalities... There's a chance!"

"If it works out, it'd be really great for us. It's certainly worth a shot."

"Kazuma isn't used to women, so I feel like he'll easily fall with just a bit of gentleness and some bodily contact!"

"Right? You girls are quite good looking and have your own charms. Plus, you know, if he finds out that you girls defended his home from

damage... You know what I'm getting at, right? Oh, this round is on me. Drink up."

I showered them with praise while providing them with alcohol.

I repeated this conversation with several other groups in the guild, lighting a fire under the female adventures.

As a result, the rumors spread far faster than I expected, and the eyes of the mostly single female adventurers changed completely.

Though, I made a slight miscalculation and the rumour spread not only amongst the female adventurers, but also to the guild staff and waitresses.

...Perhaps I went overboard.

"What's with that glassy look in your eyes? Are you getting cold feet now?"

"Of course not. I'm just praying for the safety of my faraway friend."

Sorry, Kazuma. Do your best when you get back. There's nothing more I can do.

With the Demon King's army approaching us, I can't stay here feeling sorry for my actions forever.

"H-Hey, I can see the Demon King's Army!"

Along with nervous shouts, the people capable of using the skill "Farsight" began gazing off into the distance.

I could only see blurry dots, but the people with the skill reacted with surprise, and some of them even dropped their weapons in shock.

"Keith, what's the situation?"

“They look far scarier on the ground than when scouting from the air. Can we really win this?”

Not even Keith, who had seen them in person before, could hide his nervousness.

Those who saw them for the first time are clearly in disarray. All the underhanded means and brainpower I dedicated to boost their morale were wiped away in an instant.

“It really was reckless after all. That isn’t the kind of enemy we could defeat on our own.”

“Dammit, I was planning to fight to the end here, but it really is scary...”

Pessimistic words started spreading all around me.

As the Demon King’s Army approached, those words started getting louder and more frequent.

“What are we going to do, Dust? At this rate, nevermind winning, we won’t even make it to the fight.”

Outwardly, Lynn doesn’t seem to be too fazed by this development, but the hand she used to grab my arm was trembling slightly.

“Don’t worry, I thought something like this would happen, so I already prepared something in advance!”

I raised my right hand in a swift motion and looked over to the town walls.

Standing there was a single wizard, gazing out from the ramparts into the oncoming wind.

“Oh, isn’t that Megumin over there!?”

I shouted in a loud voice and pointed towards her.

The adventurers around me followed my prompting and gazed in the same direction.

“I can’t see it clearly from here, but that outfit is definitely the crazy explosion girl!”

“Didn’t she head towards the Demon King’s castle together with Kazuma? Did they teleport back or something?”

“Wait, doesn’t something seem a little strange about her? She seems to be far taller...”

The adventurer’s amazement seemed to outweigh the fear of the Demon King’s Army, and they started whispering amongst themselves.

I quickly left the scene and used a hidden ladder behind the main gate to climb the wall, crouching down so as to not be seen by anyone on the bottom. As I approached the Megumin like figure... Sir Vanir and Loli Succubus were also standing there.

“Sir, and Loli Succubus, what are you doing here too?”

“How could Moi miss such a ridiculous show? Moi shall take a good look at the face of the troublemaking shopkeeper as repayment for all the trouble that she causes me on a daily basis.”

“I’ll always be at the side of Sir Vanir.”

So Sir came here to observe, and Loli Succubus is her usual stalker self. Well, they don’t seem to be planning to get in the way, so I’ll leave them be.

“Right, Wiz, how long are you planning to stay frozen for? Please do as we rehearsed.”

I said towards the frozen Wiz, and she stiffly turned her head around to face me, the rest of the body seemingly rooted to the spot.

Her face was bright red and her eyes were teary.

“Dust-san, isn’t this skirt too short!? No matter how you look at it, asking me to wear Megumin-san’s clothes is too much! They are so tight, it feels like they’ll rip if I move too much.”

I asked Loli Succubus to prepare some clothes that looked like the ones that Megumin wears, but it seems like they weren’t large enough to fit her.

They were so tight that every curve on her body was clearly visible, making her look really erotic.

“Sorry, that’s the only size I could find. Don’t worry, Wiz-san, there are people out there who like this kind of thing too!”

“Fuhahaha, to see a grown unmarried woman of quite substantial age wearing the clothes of a teenage girl, Moi has partook in quite a rare sight today. Fuhahahaha. Perhaps you should try wearing that outfit in the store.”

Hearing their words, Wiz trembled in embarrassment.

“Dust-san, do I really have to do this? Isn’t there some better way?”

“You’ve already dressed up like that, so what are you saying now? I prepared those clothes specifically because you said you didn’t want to be recognised by the Demon King’s army.”

“I did say that, but this is...”

It seems like she has gotten cold feet after seeing herself in that outfit.

Well, it's not like I can't understand how she's feeling. That outfit doesn't suit her at all. Still, there is a strange allure to her embarrassed reaction, so I suppose it's not too bad.

"Sorry, but there's no time to waste. The enemy is getting closer by the second."

"B-But..."

She squirmed uneasily while holding onto the hem of her skirt.

As much as I wanted to take my time and enjoy this situation, there really wasn't any time to waste.

"Wiz, I'm sure you know, but if you fire an Explosion into that army right now, it will surely deal them a great blow. However, the only two people in this town capable of using Explosion are you and Megumin, so if someone were to use Explosion, it must be one of those two people. We brought those clothes for you specifically so they wouldn't recognise you."

"I'm well aware of that. But do I really have to say it...?"

"Of course, we can't go anywhere without you saying it. Come on, there's no time to hesitate. They are almost upon us."

I pointed in the direction of the approaching monsters.

Perhaps finding her resolve after seeing that, Wiz took a deep breath and extended her staff.

"M-My name is Megumin! The Crimson Demon's... Umm..."

Wiz trailed off in the middle of her sentence and glanced my way.

Sir Vanir seemed to have expected this, and produced a cheat sheet from his sleeve with the lines written on them and held it up for Wiz to see.

“Thank you, Vanir-san. The Crimson Demon’s most incompetent businessperson! One who causes nothing but trouble for her companions and is destined to end up a destitute woman!... Wait, was that how it was supposed to go?”

Sir, don’t take advantage of the situation to make her say a bunch of nonsense.

“Nevermind that, hurry up and do your thing. They are waiting on you.”

“Y-Yes. Explosion!”

The spell Wiz casted created a glowing sphere that flew towards the center of the Demon King’s army before exploding with an impressive bang, throwing up large clouds of smoke and dust along with sending the bodies of the monsters flying through the air.

“Wow, as expected of Wiz. That’s about forty percent of them wiped out, I’d say.”

Explosion Magic is frequently thought of as a joke spell, but I suppose it’s not completely useless if it’s capable of doing this much damage with a single shot.

“That seemed to have worked well. Now I’ll go with Vanir-san to secretly reduce their strength while keeping myself hidden.”

“Moi shall put in enough work to pay for the spectacle you’ve just given me. There’s also the contract with you to consider, as well.”

“I’m counting on the both of you.”

After picking up the clothes she had stashed away in a corner, Wiz jumped down from the walls. Sir Vanir quickly followed suit, and the both of them disappeared from sight.

“I’ll help Vanir-sama too- Hey, why are you grabbing my arm? Let go of me, I won’t be able to catch up with Vanir-sama like this!”

Loli Succubus tried to follow Sir Vanir without a moment’s hesitation, but I stopped her.

“Your place isn’t there. I need your help here.”

“I don’t wanna! I get shortness of breath, heart palpitations, and dizziness whenever I’m not with Sir Vanir!”

“That’s definitely an illness, so let’s go see a doctor. Come on, stop saying stupid things and come with me. By the way, you have no right to refuse.”

When I tugged on her arm, she stopped struggling immediately.

And, for some reason, she blushed bright red and followed me without complaints.

“Aah, you’re so forceful. But I don’t hate that forceful part of you.”

“I don’t really care about your preferences, but I need your strength here, it’s not something I can ask anyone else to do.”

When I said that, Loli Succubus looked down for a moment, seemingly deep in thought about something before suddenly raising her head again.

I don’t know what was going through her mind, but she stared straight at me.

“Are you saying that I’m the only one who can do it?”

“Yeah, you are the only one I can turn to.”

“Oh, if you are going to go that far, very well! I’ll do my best for you this once, Dust-san.”

She confidently said while puffing out her non-existent chest before grabbing me and pulling me along.

I don't know why she's suddenly so motivated, but it certainly saves me the trouble of trying to convince her.

Part 5

“Heeeeeey!! This isn’t what you promised! It’s cold! The air here is really cold!”

“What did you say!? I didn’t quite catch you!”

I responded to the faint scream that came from behind me, and a screamed “Liaaaaaar!” came as a reply.

Turning back, Loli Succubus was tied with a rope around her belly, her face completely blue after being buffeted by the wind. The other end of the rope was tied to Faitfore’s tail, and with her superior speed, was dragging Loli Succubus behind her.

“Slow down a little bit.”

I said while stroking Faitfore’s neck, and the wind that was buffeting me calmed down somewhat.

“You said I was the only one you could ask, so why are you treating me like this!? Is this how you sweet talk women, use them as much as you can before dumping them out like trash!?”

“What are you saying? You are the only one who knows Faitfore’s true identity and can fly, so there’s no way I can ask any of the other Succubi for this.”

“In that case, at least let me sit behind you like the last time! Why are you treating me like a human kite!?”

She crossed her arms and pouted, showing off her anger.

...She’s not actually panicking at all, is she?

“You’ll probably fall off if you’re unsecured. Seriously though, why is everyone so eager to ride Faitfore?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Having a prince on a white horse is every maiden’s dream, and riding a white dragon is the next level above that.”

“Is that so?”

It didn’t seem like anything special to me, but evidently the self-proclaimed maiden doesn’t see it that way.

“Leaving the kidnapping aside, what exactly do you want me to do?”

“Kidnapping? You really are... I only need you to do one thing, and that is to spread false information to the guys down there.”

Right below us are the countless monsters of the Demon King’s army.

We are flying quite high up above them to prevent them from noticing us, so they just look like dots to me.

“An infiltration mission? That makes me sound like a spy. But, what should I tell them?”

“First, tell them that the Explosion Magic from earlier consumed a lot of her magic power, so she’s currently resting and waiting for it to recover, but the second strike is coming in a few minutes.”

“...What’s the point of telling them that?”

“In group warfare, numbers are everything. If the entire army were to charge in all at once, even the strongest warrior will get taken down. And we are critically outnumbered. So, in this situation, what do we need to achieve victory?”

“We need a really strong person to help us out!”

I’m surprised she could so confidently say something that sounded like it was thought up by a child.

Though, I can't say she's completely wrong. There do exist people in this world who are so strong that no amount of number disparity can match. That Mi... Whatever guy with the Magic Sword is one of those people.

"I wouldn't have to work this hard if we had someone like that on our side. And there's nothing we can do about that. That's why we need to split them up into small groups in order to defeat them individually. That's what that lie is for."

"Umm, if another Explosion is coming their way... Oh, I see! If they are all grouped up together when that happens, they'd become a perfect target for it!"

She clapped her hands in recognition after finally chancing onto my rationale.

The Explosion did hurt their forces, but that's just the prologue. My true objective is this. If we are able to disrupt the enemy's ability to command their troops, our victory is practically assured.

"We don't necessarily need to kill every last one of them. Monsters typically have low intelligence and operate primarily on instinct. After seeing so many of their friends blown away with powerful magic, they will surely be in a state of panic. Now, what do you think would happen if they were told to split up into small groups and take independent action?"

"...They'll run away."

"Exactly. That'll probably cause a large number of them to leave the battle. Don't you think our chances of victory would be much higher if that happens?"

"Dust-san, I don't know if I should call you smart or dastardly..."

"Don't praise me so much, I'm blushing."

“No, that’s not really a compliment... Right, I’ll head over to the commander and do my best to spread these rumors.”

“I’m counting on you. But don’t do anything rash. If you feel like you are in danger, just run.”

“Sure~.”

Loli Succubus waved her hand and slowly descended towards the ground.

I can only pray that this plan will work out.

“Alright then, there’s stuff we need to do on our side too. Right, partner?”

I stroked Faitfore’s neck, and she leisurely closed her eyes and leaned into it.

I retrieved the spear I had on my back and looked straight ahead.

There were several objects making their way towards me. I narrowed my eyes on them, and soon made them out to be the same Incubi that I met the other day.

“Sup. Isn’t a white dragon super bad? I was so worked up this morning, but now I think I’m going to wilt. Oh, aren’t you the young man from back then? What’s going on here?”

Of course, they still talk in the same annoying way.

“Long time no see. How have you been?”

“I’m doing really well~! No, wait, like, I really would like you to give me a proper answer.”

His tone might be the same, but his eyes are a different story. He’s completely on guard against me.

“There’s no reason for me to tell you anything. It’s not like you’d be able to tell anyone what you heard here, so what’s the point?”

“Oh, that’s some bold words from you. Don’t underestimate us just because we are carefree and pretty all the time. We might look like this, but we are considered pretty strong warriors back on our island. Right, guys!?”

“We are the strongest!” x3

All of them whipped out a set of folding spears and came right at me.

“What are you talking about? No one is stronger than us!”

“Roaaaaaar!”

In response to my words, Faitfore spat fire from her mouth.

The flames spread out in front of her, engulfing several of the Incubi. The one who were caught in the blast were quickly reduced to a crisp, falling to the ground without a single scream.

“This is bad! Spread out and surround them!”

They hurriedly tried to change their heading, but all they did was give me new openings.

Faitfore spun in a half circle on the spot, and I used the momentum to aid in my spear.

My swing cut two of them in half, and Faitfore took out another three with her tail. In a single move, We’ve taken out more than half of our foes.

“Hey, hey, you’re kidding me, right!? What is with this strength!? How could a mere human command a dragon so perfectly like it’s an extension of his own body!?”

That's obvious. Faitfore and I are two of one mind!

"It's up to you if you want to act shocked during a battle, but do you really have time for that?"

Faitfore spread her wings wide and flew at high speeds towards the enemies in front of us.

The Incubi were too shocked to make a move, and my spear thrust through them one after the other.

The remaining foes hurriedly raised their spears, but it's too late!

Showing off our superior aerial mobility, we circled around to the rear and took them all out before they had the chance to even react.

"In such a short time... You're... Kidding me... How strong..."

The last Incubus whispered with shocked eyes before slowly falling to the ground.

I swung my spear to shake off the blood on it.

"That takes care of that... Hey, now, I didn't recall ordering seconds."

I would've liked to believe that the only aerial troops they had were the Incubi, but reality isn't such a gentle thing.

A group of winged monsters like harpies and manticores were heading towards the town.

"Partner, we're charging straight in!"

"Roaaaaar!"

Before they could notice my presence, we charged towards them at breakneck speeds.

“Pant, pant, phew. You can do it if you put your heart to it.”

I charged them in order to break them up before they were fully formed up, and managed to fight them off somehow, though I’m pretty much completely spent right now. I would really like to rest for the rest of the day, but now is not the time for that.

“How is the battle going on their side?”

After making sure that there were no more enemies flying in the sky, we started descending.

As far as I can see, the battle isn’t going too badly.

The Demon King’s Army is mostly dispersed, perhaps believing the rumours that Loli Succubus spread amongst them. In the confusion, quite a few of the monsters were fleeing in the opposite direction.

“Even so, we’re still outnumbered... Wow, it looks like they’re doing really well on that side.”

Small flashes bloomed along the eastern flank of the Demon King’s army, which were quickly followed by several explosions.

I got closer to check out the situation... Only to find a one sided slaughter taking place.

“What’s with these strange masked clay dolls!? Don’t let them grab on to you! They’ll self-destruct!”

Numerous clay dolls were running around on the battlefield, grabbing onto any monsters they could find and exploding when they did.

“Dammit, that mask is mocking us! If letting them grab you is bad, then just smash them first!”

“No, you idiot! Don’t do that!”

The monster swung his club at an approaching clay doll. The moment it made contact, the doll exploded, destroying the club and sending the monster flying as well.

“These guys aren’t particularly fast! Get some distance and take them out with ranged attacks... Brrr, it’s cold! I-I can’t move my legs!”

“My legs are stuck to the ground! What is going on!?”

The monsters who tried to run away from the dolls found themselves futilely struggling in place.

“Is that... Ice?”

I thought the ground looked oddly shiny, but it seems to be the ice on the ground reflecting the sun’s light. And the ice seems to be gluing the monsters feet to the ground.

“The only one who can do such a thing... Is her, right?”

Those clay dolls were probably made by Sir Vanir. I know he created similar ones to guard his cave.

And the ice was created by Wiz’s magic. I heard that she was a renowned Archwizard known as the Ice Witch back when she was still adventuring, and seeing this sight, I have no choice but to accept it.

“Wiz’s magic freezes them in place, and Sir’s clay dolls blow them up. That’s quite a devious combination.”

In this chaotic battlefield filled with screams and the sounds of battle, everyone is too busy running to notice us flying around in the air. I spotted the two of them hiding behind a boulder some distance away from the battlefield, so I headed over and landed behind them.

“You really are something, Sir, Wiz.”

“Oh, Dust-san. We’re doing really well on this side. Casting Explosion used up most of my mana, so I don’t think I’ll be able to do much else apart from this.”

“Hmm, it’s a little unsatisfactory. Using the Vanir-Style Death Ray on them would be the fastest way to take care of them, but it’d be a problem if my identity was revealed. Still, taking in the dark emotions of the monsters isn’t too bad.”

“Looks like you have it well under control. Then, I’ll leave it in your capable hands.”

I got back onto Faitfore, and my body was once again surrounded by a floating feeling.

“Don’t worry about us. Dust-san, please take care too.”

“You’re not destined to die just yet. Until you pay off your debts, dying is prohibited for you.”

Wiz seemed to be genuinely worried for me, but Sir seems to be hiding... No, those are his true feelings.

Sir is a Devil, so he might actually show up in hell to collect if I die with my debts unpaid.

I wasn’t planning on dying in the first place, but now I have one more reason to avoid death.

Leaving this flank to the both of them, I headed over towards the main gate where the main battle was being fought.

Part 6

A fierce battle was taking place in front of the main gate.

Against goblins, kobolds, skeletons, and other small fry monsters, the adventurers would have an advantage in a one on one fight.

This might be the town of novice adventurers, but there are actually very few weak and helpless newbie adventurers here.

In particular, the male adventurers gain strength particularly easily. Of course, that's because of the existence of the Succubus shop.

The process goes like this. Newbie adventurers would be told about the existence of the Succubus shop by their seniors. Then, after experiencing it once, they would throw themselves into their quests in order to earn enough money to pay for the services.

In the process, their levels would steadily increase, and they would be newbies no longer.

However, they'll be unable to leave the Succubus shop, and continue staying in this town.

As a result, there are a large number of mid-level adventurers living in this town.

In other words, the adventurers in town are all quite skilled.

“Still, the ones standing in the back would be trouble.”

Most of the monsters in the vanguard are small fry trash that can easily be taken care of, but the ones in the rear are all high tier ones that could hardly be called small fry.

There were advanced zombies, Undead Knights wielding swords and clad in armour.

A giant horned humanoid creature, Ogres.

And there were also a few rock golems and ox-headed Minotaurs amongst them.

They are quite formidable, but fortunately there doesn't seem to be too many of them.

“There aren't any Orcs there... Right? Phew.”

I couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief when I couldn't see any female Orcs. I really don't want to see them again. My body starts trembling just by remembering them, and I can't even imagine fighting them from now on.

I would like to head straight to where my companions are and join them in the fight, but it'd be troublesome if I just appear on the back of a white dragon.

Having my past exposed isn't great, but the most important thing is Faitfore.

If word gets out that there's a white dragon in Axel, there's no doubt that it would attract the kind of scum who would lust for valuable white dragon parts.

“There's no time to think about such things right now. Let's just land over there first.”

I directed Faitfore to land in a forest not far from Axel.

After returning to her human form, I carried her on my back and rushed straight to the battlefield.

“The glorious me is here to help!”

I shouted out to the people engaged in battle, and—

“Where the hell have you been slacking off all this time? You’re still loafing about at a time like this? You really are the worst kind of garbage!”

“I’ve misjudged you! No, wait, there’s nothing about you to misjudge in the first place!”

“He must have been chasing after some female monster because human girls don’t pay him any attention! That must be it!”

They are all bruised and battered, but it seems like they still had enough energy to shoot their mouths off.

Dammit... I bet they’ll piss their pants if they knew how hard I worked behind the scenes.

“You don’t even know how hard I was working! Stop mouthing off!”

“Why don’t you tell us exactly what you were up to!? It’s probably all lies anyway, and we are busy, so summarize it in ten words or less! Go on!”

“Yeah, yeah! Tell us the truth and be killed by us, or lie to us and be thrown into the enemy camp as bait! Make your choice!”

“I’ll die either way!”

I’m seriously considering attacking them from the back before taking out the monsters.

As I was trembling with anger, someone placed a gentle hand on my back, and I turned around.

“Don’t get angry, Dust.”

“We know how hard you’ve been working. Isn’t that enough?”

“You don’t want to reveal your true identity, right? Good work out there. How did it go?”

My companions were comforting me with a smile on their face.

...Well as long as my companions understand, that’s good enough for me.

“Well, there’s no time to talk about it here. It’s fine if I wait to tell you the story until after we kick the asses of all of them, right?”

“Sure.”

“I don’t mind.”

“Don’t put in any weird embellishments, okay?”

After gaining my companion’s understanding, I lead the charge straight into the enemy center.

The adventurers who saw us begin our assault opened a path for us.

The closest enemy to us was a bunch of bipedal dog-like creatures, Kobolds.

Taylor was the first one in, charging straight into where the enemies are most closely packed with his shield at the ready.

“Uwooooooh! I’m your enemy! Come get me!”

He struck his shield with the pommel of his sword and used the skill Decoy to attract the attention of the enemy.

“Ha, you’re wide open!”

I took the opportunity to move around to the side of the enemy and thrust my spear into their vulnerable flanks.

A few of the Kobolds came to their senses and rushed at me from behind, but I didn't even bother to look their way.

With the sound of something cutting through the air, the Kobolds approaching my back fell to the ground.

"I won't let you two hog all the spotlight."

Keith, kneeling on one knee, flipped his bangs in a way that I'm sure looked really cool in his head.

Seemingly acknowledging our strength, one of the Kobolds let out a howl, which the others responded to by forming up around him, weapons at the ready.

"Great, just as we planned. Fireball!"

Lynn's spell landed right in the middle of the gathering of monsters.

An explosion of flame and smoke engulfed them, and the smell of roasted meat began to fill the air.

She got around ten of them with that one attack.

Unlike Kazuma's party, my party doesn't have super strong abilities that are second to none.

However, we have the trust and understanding that has built up after spending so long together. On top of that, Taylor, Keith, and Lynn aren't the same people I met way back when. They've grown along with me.

"Oh, not bad! We aren't going to lose either!"

"There's no telling what they'll say about us if we perform even worse than Dust! Everyone, put your backs into it!"

“We’re going to get better achievements than Dust! We won’t get rewarded if we fall behind!”

The other, invigorated by our success, pushed deep into the Demon King’s Army.

“You humans are getting carried away! I will not allow myself to be defeated in a fight against mere newbie adventurers!”

Seemingly irritated by our onslaught, one of the undead knights swung his sword around and declared. It was a fair bit larger than the other knights, and his equipment is also particularly high quality.

Undead Knights, to put it bluntly, are a straight upgrade from zombies.

It was surrounded by undead, so it must be the frontline commander.

“Stop your futile resistance, fledgling adventurers who are too weak to be called to the capital’s defence! I shall avenge my master, Beldia-sama, right here!”

Did he say Beldia just now?

I heard that name before. If I recall, he was that Dullahan Demon King’s General that attacked this town in the past. He was the one who took residence in the castle outside town and was driven insane by Megumin’s troublemaking tendencies.

In the end, he ended up getting purified by Aqua.

“Hey, you! Upgraded Zombie!”

“Don’t call me a zombie!”

He heard my call and spat back.

He's an undead, so I can't read his face, but I can tell that he was staring at me with his lifeless eyes from behind that helmet.

If he's the commander, then taking him out would definitely throw the army into chaos. The problem is, how do I get to him with the army of undead in the way?

Even if I wanted to defeat them, there's way too many of them. It wouldn't be easy to clear a path through them. If only there's a way to get him to come over to me...

"Is there something you want from me, pitiful being that clings so desperately to life?"

He's quite the arrogant bastard, isn't he?

"You're calling us pitiful and all that, but if you're an undead, that means you must've been a human once, right?"

"Indeed. I did indeed use to be a pitiful being like you. However, I was reborn as an undead and discarded the pitiful shell that is humanity. I am a superior being that's free of all desires."

Seeing this corpse prattle about with such arrogance made my blood boil a little, but I should be able to exploit his pride.

"Oh, great undead, there is one thing I wish to ask... Since you no longer have any desires, does that include sexual desires, too? Actually, can you even use that thing after becoming a zombie? It didn't drop off after you rotted, did it? Hahahahah!"

"Stop it, Dust. Undead creatures don't need to eat, sleep, or lust. I wonder what they even live for. Oh, my bad, they are already dead! Ahahaha!"

Keith caught on to what I was trying to do and quickly joined in, clutching his belly as he laughed.

“...Vulgar men full of lust. It is really regrettable that my master was killed in a town inhabited by such lowly adventurers. My underlings, go ahead and destroy these vile, lowly beings.”

He seems visibly angered by that, but he only gave instructions to his underlings and made no moves of his own.

His face is completely dead, so it's hard to judge, but considering his words and actions, he's probably just a short push away from snapping.

“You sure are spouting a lot of arrogant stuff from a safe place. You aren't scared, are you? Why don't you try being a man for a change and lead your troops properly? Ah, you know what, nevermind. Please stay away from me. Your body smells so bad I think I might retch if you come any closer. Right, Lynn?”

Lynn seemed surprised when I addressed her, but she quickly caught on to what I'm doing after I gave her a nod. She tilted her head back and closed her eyes for a moment before responding.

“Even monsters need to take care of themselves, you know? You look to be a high ranking member in the military, but that means you need to pay extra attention. Do you know what odor harassment is?”

“It stinks. It stinks.”

Lynn and Faitfore pinched their noses and frowned.

“Don't say he stinks. He's an undead, of course he would stink. Please forgive my companions for their rudeness.”

Taylor gently admonished the two and politely apologized, but they seemed to have the opposite effect on the undead knight, whose body began to tremble.

“M-My men and I are all undead. As such, none of us have a sense of smell! There’s no one who would care about such things!”

“Ah, that’s why. I was wondering why your unit was so isolated and none of the others wanted to get close to you. So this is why. Well, I understand, no one would like to get close to that stench. Right, you guys?”

I threw the conversation to the Kobolds that we’ve just been fighting, and they moved away, wrinkling their noses and averting their gaze as they did.

They didn’t say anything, their actions clearly conveyed their thoughts. Kobolds are dog-type monsters, so they have a heightened sense of smell. I’m sure this stench is unbearable to them.

Seeing their reaction, the undead knight fell to his knees on the spot.

“I’ve felt isolated from the other races several times in the Demon King’s army, but I’ve always told myself that it was just my imagination! I didn’t realize it was because of this stench! Is this why I can’t get along with Kobolds!? Even though I had several dogs at the mansion before I died!”

It seems like it affected him more badly than I expected.

“I’m starting to feel sorry for him. Dust, you should apologize for going too far.”

“Y-Yeah, of course. Don’t take it too seriously. You know... your body might be rotten, but that doesn’t mean your mind is too, right?”

After I gently reassured him, the undead knight silently stood up.

“Guaaaaaaaah!! How dare a mere human humiliate me so thoroughly... I’ll send you to the other side with my bare hands!”

The undead knight swung his sword, and his underlings silently parted, opening a path between the undead knight and us.

“You four who’ve humiliated me, come forth and fight. Or drop everything and prostrate yourself before me. Know that if you draw your blade, we will be fighting to the death.”

“Four against one, huh? We sure are being looked down upon. Don’t regret this now.”

This idiot fell for our provocation and came rushing out.

“You are the one who’s looking down on us. What are you doing carrying a toddler with you on the battlefield? You should put her down and hurry her to safety.”

“That’s very kind of you, but there’s no need for your concern. There’s no way you can even scratch me. Oh, I see what you’re trying to do. You don’t want to look lame when you lose, so you want us to go all out against you. Is that right?”

“Dust, you should learn to read the mood. It’d be too embarrassing for him if he were to lose to someone carrying a toddler on his back, that’s why he’s asking you in a roundabout way.”

“Yeah, that would look bad. Sorry, sorry, I’ll drop her off.”

As I pretended to put down the struggling Faitfore, the undead knight drove his sword into the ground.

“Enough! Step right up! If you keep shooting your mouth off, I’ll make sure you’ll never talk again. You shall experience first hand the swordplay that impressed even Beldia-sama!”

Oh, he got really mad. If he wasn’t an undead, his face would probably be bright red right now.

“You guys, we’re going serious from now on. He’s probably the commander of the army, and he seems quite strong. So if we defeat him, the situation would definitely turn in our favour. Let’s go all out and make him cry.”

“He doesn’t look tasty at all.”

“You don’t need to tell me twice. With such a large audience, this is the perfect place to get some achievements.”

“Leave the defence to me, you guys just focus on the attack.”

“Don’t get caught up in my magic.”

My companions replied calmly.

They were acting the same as usual without a hint of panic. They really are a reliable bunch.

The other adventurers are desperately fighting to keep the enemy away from us, so for their sakes too, let’s finish him off.

Taylor and I stepped forward, shoulder to shoulder.

The undead knight’s weapon is a greatsword, without a shield.

First, Taylor raised his shield and approached his opponent with swift steps. I stayed behind him to observe his fighting style.

“Useless struggles!”

The Undead knight swung his sword in a large swing, and Taylor took it with his shield. Seeing his movement temporarily stopped, I judged it to be a great moment to charge in, but the body in front of me suddenly disappeared.

“Graaah!”

Taylor growled as he slid across the ground with his shield still up. Was he sent flying by that attack? Looking closer, there was a large dent in his shield, and small cracks were beginning to form all around it.

“Are you alright!?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. But that strength of his isn’t normal.”

There are several key differences between humans and zombies, namely, they have no sense of pain, they are far stronger, and most importantly, they stink.

He was probably quite strong even before he became a zombie.

“Hang in there! Snipe!”

Keith’s arrow rushed towards the knight’s face, but it was deflected by the flat of his blade.

He fired three more arrows at him, but all three of them were blocked.

“Fire is a staple against the undead. Fireball!”

Lynn’s fireball landed on target, but the undead knight emerged from the resulting flames with nary a scratch.

“Your firepower isn’t bad, but you’ll need far stronger magic to be able to burn me down.”

Does he have magic resistance too?

“Still, you guys are stronger than I expected. I had thought there was no need to bring this level of force to bear against a town of newbie adventurers, but it seems like I have to rethink that.”

“So why don’t you pull back and gather more reinforcements?”

“It’s a tempting proposal, but the main force of the Demon King’s Army is currently attacking the capital together with the Demon King’s daughter. There are no more forces that can be sent our way.”

The information that Princess Leonor gave me wasn’t wrong after all.

The part worth noting is that the enemy doesn’t have any reinforcements. All we have to do is to repel the enemy right in front of us, and we’d be done. Simple enough.

“There’s another reason I can’t retreat. Now that many of the Demon King’s Generals have been defeated and their seats left open, if I were to achieve great results here, getting a spot as a General wouldn’t be out of the question. Getting the same position as Beldia-sama... No, if we are the same rank, he would simply be Beldia, wouldn’t it? Kuhahaha!”

He placed his hand on his forehead and arched his body backwards, mocking his supposedly respected boss.

...After saying all those things, he sure does change on a whim.

“You say humans are vulgar creatures full of lust, but you are obsessed with gaining power yourself!”

“Shut up! How can you understand us undead, creatures who’ve lost the three great desires!? I can’t sleep, I can’t eat, and it won’t stand up! What’s wrong with pursuing wealth and power when I’ve lost all that!”

It seems like all his daily resentment had pooled up within him, and the way spouted out his true feelings is somewhat painful to watch.

But it seems like his thoughts are shared with his undead, the surrounding zombies and skeletons nodded sympathetically. Seems like it isn’t easy being an undead either.

“Looks like you finally broke... But I don’t dislike that. Rather than being a saint with no desires, having a little bit of humanity is far better.”

“You... are a far more amiable person than I thought. Had we met under different circumstances, we might actually get along.”

“Ah, that might be true. I would’ve loved to have a drink with you.”

The undead knight and I looked at each other and shyly rubbed our noses.

This place overflowed with a warm feeling that didn’t suit a battlefield at all.

Just then, a sharp shock suddenly hit me from the back.

“Ouch! What was that for!?”

Turning back, I saw Lynn waving her wand around.

“What, the two of you can understand each other now? Stop creating an atmosphere that will make it harder for us to kill him. You too, you’re pretty high ranked in your army, right? Get it together already.”

“I’m sorry.” x2

The undead knight and I said in unison.

“Now that she’s pissed off, there’s no helping it. Come on, let’s go.”

“I almost forgot my position for a moment, but let’s do it.”

After regaining our composure, we readied our weapons.

He raised his greatsword, while I lowered my center of mass and exhaled.

As my companions and the Demon King's Army's soldiers looked on with abated breath, I was the first one to make a move.

I stepped forward and thrust my spear from outside the range of his greatsword.

Speed, power, and footing, all of them were perfect. My spear shot out with lightning speed... and plunged straight into the undead knight's stomach.

"You did it! Dust, great job!"

My companions and the surrounding adventurers cheered, but I didn't have the time to respond to them now.

That's because the undead knight was gripping the hilt of my spear with his undead strength while staring straight at me.

"Not bad. If I was a human, you would've won!"

"You deliberately walked into that, didn't you!?"

Before I had the time to regret falling for his trap, he swung his greatsword down towards my head.

I wanted to let go of my spear and jump back, but it's already too late.

"Dust—!"

Just as Lynn shouted, just as everyone looked away, expecting the worst outcome—

"Do it, Faitfore."

"Un."

Faitfore placed her chin on my shoulder, opened her mouth, and let out a blast of flame.

The undead knight received the blast head on and rolled around on the ground in agony.

“Aaaaaaaah! I’m burning!”

“I’ll put you out of your misery.”

I pulled out my spear and swung it at his neck, beheading him.

The burning head rolled around on the ground, before stopping at the feet of his underlings.

As it did so, all the undead around us stopped moving. He really was commanding them after all.

“What a pity. Underestimating my partner is the reason why you lost.”

...I actually only recently learnt that she could spit fire while in her humanoid form, but there’s no reason to bring it up.

I raised my spear towards the sky and struck a victory pose.

With this, a loud cheer rang out... no, wait, it didn’t.

The whole place was silent, and everyone who was busy fighting just a moment ago stopped and stared silently at me.

What’s with that look?

“... I thought he was about to hit Dust, but he ended up burning instead?”

“Yeah. Why did he suddenly start burning? Did Dust pull some kind of trick or something?”

“The little girl on his back was moving around, and it looked like she was on fire for a moment... Hmm...”

Everyone was looking at me with suspicious looks.

This isn't good. No one seemed to have gotten a good look at when Faitfore breathed fire, but they are definitely suspecting something. There's no way I can let them know about Faitfore's true form. How do I get out of this?

Is there a convincing way to explain how he suddenly caught fire... would there even be such a thing?

"Say, Dust, did that girl just breath—"

"Wah! Thank goodness the spell came in on time! It came in at the perfect time. Thank me, my spell saved your life. Wow, it was a pretty great strike, if I do say so myself. Yeah, I'm pretty good when I put my mind to it."

Lynn came in and interrupted the adventurer before he could finish his question.

She spouted out her words with rapid fire quickness, not allowing the adventurer a word in at all.

"Eh, but, that girl—"

"Yeah, yeah, now is not the time for standing about. We need to take out all the undead that became immobile. Come on, get to it!"

"O-Oh, yeah!"

Lynn forcefully interrupted him and issued instructions, and the adventurers rushed to take out the undead who were rendered immobile after the loss of their leader.

Seems like this area is taken care of.

"Thanks for the help, Lynn."

“You always lie without a second thought, so don’t clam up at a time like this. Seriously, you really can’t make it would me.”

“Y-Yeah. I’ll be counting on your help in the future too.”

“Leave it to me.”

Lynn puffed out her chest and gave me a joyous smile.

As I looked at that beautiful face, someone bit me on the head.

“Hey, cut it out, Faitfore! My brain isn’t tasty! Stop chewing on it! What if I go bald!?”

“Dust, your face looks really bad.”

I pulled Faitfore off my spit covered head, before tossing her some of the hidden rations I had on me in order to calm her down. It should keep her in check for now as she chewed on them.

“After we’ve cleaned this place up, we can march on the enemy headquarters—”

“W-What’s with these guys! They suddenly started running!”

“H-Hey, wait! They are heading towards town! Someone stop them!”

“Dammit, the others are in my way.”

Just as I began to feel safe, we were interrupted by a set of sudden screams.

I looked in the direction of the noise, and noticed that a portion of the undead suddenly started moving and surged towards the town. To make matters worse, a group of ogres took advantage of the chaos and rushed into the town along with them.

“What the hell! Aren’t they supposed to stop moving after we defeated that guy!?”

“Kukuku, you’re too naive, humans.”

“This voice is!?”

A familiar voice came towards me from the ground.

I searched for the source of the voice, and after a brief search, I managed to determine that it came from the detached head of the undead knight at my feet.

“You are such fools for falling for my act. I’m not actually an undead knight, but a Dullahan! So even if you take my head off, I’ll be perfectly fine!”

“That’s what’s going on. You really got me good.”

“Your looks of surprise were really something to behold. Though, even if you defeated me, all the undead would simply revert back to following their instincts and go wild... Um, what are you doing?”

I silently approached the head and raised my spear.

“What else could it be? You could’ve simply remained silent and played dead, but you had to go out of your way to provoke us. I’m simply delivering the final blow.”

“Um, you know, uh, attacking a frail and defenceless detached head is a violation of human rights...”

“Corpses don’t have human rights!”

Silencing the detached head is nice, but there’s no way I can just leave the ones who ran into town be.

Chapter 3



A PERIOD FOR THAT STORY



A Period for that Story

Part 1

My companions and the other adventurers are stuck dealing with the remaining enemies. Guess I have no choice but to go!

“I’ll leave them to you! I’m going after the ones who went into the town!”

“Yeah, go ahead! I’ll handle this place!”

“Make sure you protect the lady, you hear!?”

“Clean it up quickly and come back home!”

With the words of encouragement from my comrades behind me, I rushed towards the gates of Axel.

The gates had been opened slightly in order to transport the wounded back. Now they were forced open, and the soldiers that were guarding it were now laying at the side.

“Hey, are you okay!?”

“Y-yeah, somehow. Nevermind me, go after the monsters! They split into two groups, one went towards the adventurer’s guild... The other headed for the rich residential areas... Cough... Gurk!”

The soldier suddenly coughed in the middle of his sentence, spitting out a large amount of blood.

If he’s spitting out that much blood he must have suffered severe internal damage. It might be too late for him.

“It’s fine, don’t talk anymore!”

“Don’t worry, this is just the wine I drank earlier to calm my nerves.”

Right, I’ll just leave him be.

Leaving the soldier behind, I ran into the town, but which way should I go?

The closest place would be the adventurer’s guild. There should be wounded adventurers there...

If they were attacked now, they wouldn’t be able to fight back. Still, I couldn’t just ignore the other group.

“Faitfore, I have a request for you.”

“What is it, Dust?”

I loosened the straps on my carry bag and let Faitfore down.

“I’m going to go after the monsters that went this way. Can you go after the other ones? You can change back to your dragon form, just make sure you protect the people there.”

“Okay.”

Faitfore nodded twice, and I ruffled her hair in response.

Her human form would be unable to keep up with the monsters. Transforming back would most likely cause the rumours of a white dragon to spread once again, but that's the least of my concerns right now.

"Oh, Dust-san, what are you doing here?"

I looked up at the voice and saw a man dressed in a full-faced, suspicious looking helmet atop a white horse.

This is the strange noble who bought my used helmet in the past and is still wearing it now. I mentally called him the helmeted bastard.

"Is that girl... She can't be... Dust-san's child!?"

"Of course not! Now is not the time to be talking about that! Can I ask you to do something?"

"Yes, of course!"

The response came within seconds before I could even tell him what I wanted.

Well, it's a good thing that he's so quick to agree, so I won't push him on that.

"Take her and go after the monsters! And don't tell anyone what you see there!"

"It'll be our little secret! I won't tell a soul! I'll take this secret to my grave!"

"O-Oh, well, thanks."

It kinda bothers me that he's breathing heavily, but I'll ignore that.

After gathering my thoughts, I rushed in the opposite direction of the white horse.

The door to the adventurer's guild had been completely smashed open, and several shouts were coming from inside.

My mind couldn't help but come up with the worst-case scenario, but I pushed them aside and ran off into the guild.

"Are you guys... Alive...?"

The scene that greeted me caused my thoughts to freeze in their tracks.

The group of ogres and the wounded adventurers facing off, that I can understand.

But why is Sir Vanir stuck between both sides as they glared at each other?

"Dammit, we can't let them destroy the guild! Protect the guild and the staff!"

"You don't need to tell me twice."

The adventurers, weapons in hand, took up positions in front of the guild staff.

They are wounded, but instead of running away they choose to stand their ground.

"Everyone... Even though you constantly cause headaches for us by always messing around and making us clean up your messes, complaining about why the commission fees are so high, and hitting on us when you get drunk, you really do care about us. It made me marry late, but I'm glad I became a receptionist at the guild."

Luna and the other receptionists seemed moved by that display of bravery by the adventurers.

“Of course I’ll protect you. We won’t get paid if we don’t, after all!”

“Eh?”

“I sure as hell ain’t putting in this much effort and getting this battered for free! If this place gets destroyed, I won’t even have enough money for drinks tomorrow!”

“.....”

After hearing the adventurers’ true feelings, the guild staff froze and fell silent.

Personally I think it’s better than putting on a false front and dressing it up, but oh well.

“Hah, I acknowledge your guts at least, but do you really think you can take on us ogres with those broken bodies of yours?”

One of the ogres, who stood a head taller than the others, stepped forward and taunted the adventurers. It seems to be acting as their leader.

Ogres aren’t like goblins or other small fry, they are fierce and fairly powerful monsters.

At the very least, they aren’t enemies a low-level adventurer can take head on.

“True, we might not be able to defeat you with our wounds like this. But still, there are times in a man’s life where he cannot back down no matter what!”

“Um, we’re women though.”

Despite knowing that they have no chance of victory, the adventurers nodded, refusing to run away.

.....It may seem cool at first glance, but they've been sneaking glances at Sir Vanir all this time.

The ogres clearly wanted a fight, but yet they refrained from attacking. Just like the adventurers, they've been sneaking glances at Sir Vanir, clearly finding his presence concerning.

As for the center of attention himself, he simply pulled up a chair by a table and began leisurely sipping tea.

Wait a minute, if Sir's body is made of dirt, can he even taste anything?

Nevermind, that's not important right now.

"Um, Vanir-san, we're in a bit of a tight spot right now. If you could help us fight these guys, it'd be a great help."

"Oh, do you wish to consult with me about some difficult matter?"

Sir pulled a crystal ball from somewhere and placed it on the table.

"Welcome to the consultation office, troubled adventurer. No matter your difficulties, allow me to resolve it through divination."

Is he seriously entering Consultation mode now?!

Sir provides consulting services in the corner of the guild ever so often... Or rather, he usually resolves issues with his accurate predictions.

This isn't anything new for him, but why is he doing it now?

"Oh, um— we want you to fight, not tell fortunes."

“Wait! That’s the former Demon King’s General Vanir-sama! What are you doing in human territory?”

The ogre who seemed to be the leader approached Sir Vanir, immediately making his tone more polite.

He seemed to know of Sir. But wasn’t that statement dangerous? If those guys learnt that Sir was formerly a Demon King’s General, they might cause a ruckus—

“Ah, so he was a Demon King’s General.”

“His face was plastered on the bulletin board with the bounty. See, I told you he was the real deal.”

“With such a conspicuous mask and unique character, it’s obvious to anyone.”

In the end, no one was surprised at all. Everyone accepted this revelation without causing any trouble.

“Well, Moi is simply a part-timer working in a magic item shop now. Speaking of, would thou be interested in any of our excess inventory?”

“No, wait! Why is a former Demon King’s General working in a magic item shop?! You must be making way less money!”

I hadn’t realized the Demon King’s Generals were on a payroll.

“This buffon is too noisy. Moi is a ‘former’ Demon King’s General. That contract only applied to my former body, thus, in this different body, Moi is now free. Thou should think before making such unreasonable statements. Now, cease occupying Moi’s precious time, thou art preventing Moi from doing business. Shoo, shoo!”

Sir waved his hand as if shooing away a fly, and the ogre shut his mouth.

Upon seeing this, one of the adventurers hurriedly stood in front of Sir Vanir.

“Vanir-san, can you tell us how to win this fight?”

“Ah, finally, a customer. Well, that is a different matter. Moi shall determine the future at a very low price... Oh, so that is how it is. This is quite fortunate for thou, thou can spend money to hire a strong devil.”

Oh, this is exactly what I'd expect from Sir.

The adventurer who asked the question seemed to understand and leaned over the table towards Sir Vanir.

“How much would it cost to buy this devil for our side?”

“Wait a minute! If you want money, I have it! How about 100,000 Eris!”

The Ogre Loudly interrupted.

“Hey, cut that out! We'll give you 200,000!”

“How about 300,000!”

“400,000– no, 450,000!”

“How much money does everyone have on them right now? Hurry, take it all out!”

The bidding for Vanir's help had begun.

The price soared rapidly in a short period of time. Although I wanted to participate, I didn't have any money. Not only that, but the money I borrowed from Sir hadn't been repaid.

So, I could only watch from the sidelines.

“701,000 eris!”

“Then we’ll give him 701,005 eris!”

Both sides seemed to be approaching their limits financially, so they started raising the price only slightly.

“Ten million.”

“Huh?”

I heard an absurdly large number.

“I will pay ten million eris.”

It was Luna, the receptionist, who walked over in front of Sir Vanir.

“Have you lost your mind?”

“No, I want to use the 10 million eris from the Guild’s treasury to buy Vanir-san.”

The unexpected development silenced both sides.

Luna looked serious, and Sir Vanir looked at her with joy.

“Oh, fuhahahaha! Yes, Moi likes thou very much, human woman with little prospects of marriage! Moi shall be bought by thou for ten million eris!”

“Thank you very much, Vanir-san. So, could you solve this monster problem right away?”

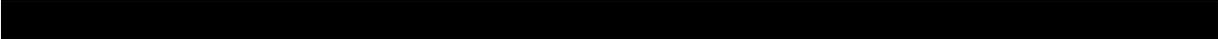
Luna smiled and motioned towards the Ogres.

“Understood, this concludes the auction. Now, witness the new-and-improved Vanir-Style Death Ray!”

Sir Vanir began to shoot beams of mysterious light at the Ogres running around.

Seems like I can leave this place to Sir.

There was no reason to stick around to watch the conclusion, so I ran out of the guild to hunt down the other group of monsters.



Part 2

“It should be right around here...”

I had questioned the townsfolk that I had passed as I followed the path the undead had taken, but what they told me was bizarre.

“The undead and monsters ran out straight ahead without even looking at us. So we didn’t suffer any damage, but it was really scary!”

“Yeah, yeah! The undead seemed to be completely out of control while the other monsters were desperately trying to keep up with them.”

That’s what they had said. Others said similar things, and for now there didn’t seem to be any damage done to the town.

That’s good and all, but still, what were they after?

I kept thinking about it the whole time I ran, but I still couldn’t figure it out.

“Bah, I can’t figure it out, no use thinking about it!”

I immediately discarded those troublesome thoughts and ran forward.

There was also another concerning thing on my mind at that moment. That is, I knew this road. I’d walked it several times, in fact.

After passing through several alleyways, what appeared in front of me... Was Kazuma’s mansion.

“Their goal is to defeat Kazuma, the one who killed several Demon King’s Generals?”

Well, then they came all this way for nothing. Kazuma and the others should have been near the Demon King's Castle by now, they may have even broken into it.

"But... Doesn't Aqua-sama always seem to inexplicably draw undead towards her? Could it be that her residual smell attracted these undead?"

Anyway, I can't let them destroy Kazuma's mansion. My best friend asked me to protect his home, I hadn't forgotten.

I slowly approached the manion and heard screams from inside.

There should be no one in Kazuma's mansion. Maybe the neighbors were involved?

"Let me make it in time... Huh?"

Just when I had started to worry, I saw a white horse standing outside the mansion, along with the helmeted bastard and Faitfore.

"What are you doing! Can't you see the mansion is under attack?"

They looked back at me, their expressions completely unfazed.

"Oh, it's Dust-san. It's not so much the mansion is being attacked as the mansion is attacking."

"Yes, it's probably fine."

"Stop talking nonsense!"

I pushed aside the two who were saying some nonsensical things to take a look at the mansion myself, at which point I was greeted by an incredible scene.

"Ugh! The vines in the field are tying me up! Let go of me, let go!"

"Gah! The vegetables are exploding!"

“The zombies and skeletons are just bone meal in the garden now!”

The undead were exploding and scattered about in the garden.

Other monsters of the Demon King’s Army got caught in the plant stems and vines, or were blown up by vegetables that flew out of the garden, or were hit by wine bottles and rocks thrown from inside the mansion.

Wait, was someone in there? I tried to look inside, but I couldn’t see anyone.

“What’s the matter with this cat and chicken? Come on, get out of here! Be careful, or I’ll kill you.”

There was a black cat and a chicken near a monster who was trying to cut himself free of the vines.

The black cat was the Explosion Girl’s cat that had wings and a weird name. The chicken must be the chick with the grand name that Aqua-sama cared for.

“Hey, don’t play with those little animals... No, no, no!”

“Why are you so nervous all of a sudden? What’s the matter?”

The monster that had been staring at the animals suddenly broke down.

“I just used appraisal magic to observe the status of those two, and that chicken’s level is way too high! And that black cat’s class is ‘Evil God’...”

I caught snatches of the demons’ conversation, but are those two really that powerful?

I must have heard it wrong; I’ll just pretend I didn’t hear anything. This mess was complicated enough without adding extra problems.

The demons didn't seem to notice us. I watched them carefully while carrying Faitfore.

Their attention was focused on the vegetation and the two animals, leaving their backs wide open, so we easily took care of them

“Well, that takes care of that... Faitfore, what are you eating?”

“Sticky potatoes.”

I was wondering what she'd been doing so quietly, and it turned out she'd been eating the vegetables scattered all over.

“Spit that out! Don't just eat whatever you find on the ground.”

“Give it back—”

I snatched the sticky potatoes that Faitfore had taken and put them in my pocket. If I threw it on the ground, she'd just pick it up and eat it again.

After I convinced her with *“I'll let you eat something more delicious later”*, I put Faitfore, who was still having a tantrum, on the white horse.

Now that we've protected the mansion (sorta), I rode the white horse across the town and searched for any other monsters that may have broken in. By the way, the Helmeted Bastard kindly let me borrow the horse.

“If I rode on the same saddle that Dust-san's hips clung to, it would be just like as if we became one.”

He was mumbling something, but I was in a hurry so I ignored it.

I paid a visit to the magic item shop just to be safe, and saw the Penguin suit deftly overwhelming the monsters with its nimble movements.

I thought he was just a mascot; I didn't expect him to be a watchdog too... Although I guess it would be 'watch-bird'.

Since Kazuma's mansion and the Magic Item Shop were fine, I needed to get back to the front gate as soon as possible. I was worried about Lynn and everyone.

"Dust, it's noisy there."

"Uhh! Why did you grab me all of a sudden!"

Faitfore grabbed my cheek and turned my face to the side.

Listening carefully... There definitely was a noise.

That's the direction of the police station. Was some idiot really taking this opportunity to cause trouble at the police station? If that's all it is, the police will be able to deal with it even without my help. But if it's a monster...

"If I lend them a hand now, I might get treated better the next time I have to pay the cells a visit."

"You aren't honest."

"Tsk, that's not true."

Despite my harsh tone, my body subconsciously began moving in the direction of the commotion.

"There's a pervert – there's a perverted demon here!"

"This guy is clearly a pervert, so why is he so strong!"

“Who are you calling a pervert?!”

The strangest arrest I’d ever seen was happening in front of the police station.

A demon man wearing only his shirt and underwear was swinging a sword and causing a scene.

“Suddenly-appearing perverted demon! This is a warning! Throw down your weapons immediately and do not resist!”

“Stop talking! Damn it, damn it, how did I get here? I was just at the Demon King’s castle... Where’s that fast-talking scumbag! Calm down, I have to stay calm and conduct myself like a knight. Damn, how am I supposed to figure this out. What do I do now?”

He kept waving his sword like a child having a fit, so the policemen were unable to get close. It seems that some of them were already been cut down, several policemen were lying bleeding on the ground

He looked just like an ordinary pervert, why was he so strong?

If the police tried to capture him they would end up with at least a few casualties.

But, I should be able to deal with this problem on my own.

They usually arrest me without even giving me a chance to speak, but it’d be nice to see them crying and thanking me.

I probably shouldn’t fight in front of the police with Fairfore clinging onto me like that. They might charge me with something else.

Getting off the horse, I told Fairfore to quietly wait for me on the horse, before breaking to the center of the commotion.

“You guys are no match for him, move aside and don’t get in my way.”

I pushed a policeman aside and walked forward. This guy took me into the station two weeks ago on the charge of 'I couldn't be innocent.'

"It's Dust, what are you doing here? Are you really still lazing around when all this is going on? You're really..."

"No! I came here to help because I saw you were in trouble. Be thankful and don't arrest me again. Anyway, hurry up and get the injured to safety."

"Is this a necessary sacrifice... I'm sorry, please hold him back as long as possible. We'll send help right away after we take care of the injured. That pervert might not look like much, but he's dangerous, be careful!"

I lazily waved at the worried policeman while keeping my back to him.

Normally, he would've just yelled and scolded me, but it seemed he was actually worried.

"Hey, pervert! I'm in a hurry, so let's get this over with."

"Who are you? I was suddenly teleported to this random place, and now I'm really starting to get angry. Well, since you want to fight, I'll take my anger out on you!"

He immediately crouched down and clenched his longsword, taking the stance of a practiced warrior.

I raised my spear in answer to his challenge and breathed quietly.

He seemed to understand my strength at a glance, and began to carefully edge closer. Another step forward and he would be in my spear's range.

At that moment, he suddenly stopped moving and raised his sword overhead. Was he trying to draw me out?

I didn't want to spend too much time fighting him, so I took on his challenge.

I stepped forward and stabbed forward with the spear at the same time. The spearhead moved quickly towards his chest, but bounced off the sword as he swung it down.

Then, he shortened the distance in one breath and swiped the sword horizontally.

I saved myself from falling as I dodged. I jumped back up, trying to sweep his legs with the spear, but he quickly blocked it with his sword.

“Not bad for a pervert.”

“I'm not a pervert! My name is Noss! You're not too bad either, I'm impressed that mere humans still have this level of skill.”

He was a bit like Sir Vanir. In this world, your appearance and strength aren't necessarily related. If I let my guard down, I'll be taken out in an instant.

I kept my distance, stabbing at him periodically with my spear which was deflected by his sword strikes.

He's strong. He's definitely a strong enemy, but he has a weakness when it comes to defence.

Although he blocked the attacks I put a lot of force into, he let the lighter, faster stabs get through. Because of this, the number of cuts he took was slowly increasing. It was slow going, but it did seem to hurt him.

“Ugh, this level of attack would be nothing if I had my armor.”

From the barely audible whisper, I guessed that dressing like this was not actually his hobby, but he just didn't have his armour on for some reason.

In that case, I'll target his weakness.

“I hereby declare that my next attack will take you down fair and square.”

“Hah, you sound confident, well try it if you can!”

I lowered my body and sprinted forward, stopping just at the edge of his sword's attack range. Then, I took something out of my pocket and threw it at his head.

“Ha, such a ridiculous display! That's almost clever, using a projectile like this!”

The pervert sliced upwards towards the thing I threw, cutting it in half with his sword. And I stabbed the halves repeatedly.

“Ha, it doesn't hurt to attack my head...Ugh! It's so itchy!”

A white, sticky material flowed down the body of the pervert, and he grabbed his bare neck, arms, and feet.

I had thrown out one of those potatoes Faitfore had been eating. This potato was actually a taro root, which causes severe itching when it touches the skin.

Since it was a vigorous and aggressive taro root, I thought the itching ingredients would also be very intense. It seemed I was correct.

The pervert rolled all over the floor looking pitiful, so I used the shaft of my spear to knock him unconscious.

Since we were in front of the police station, it seemed fine to leave him. He'd be thrown in prison here.

“Who even was that guy anyway?”



Part 3

Although it took longer than I expected, I finally returned to the front gate to find that the adventurers and the undead had already finished their fight.

Some of the adventurers seemed to be injured, but most of the adventurers were still up and seemed alright. After confirming that my party was safe, I breathed a sigh of relief.

“Looks like you took care of things on your end, Dust. The undead here have been wiped out, so all that’s left is...”

Taylor patted me on the shoulder and praised me, but his eyes weren’t on me, but on the battlefield.

His eyes were fixed on the enemy’s base camp.

Although it looked like there weren’t many left, each monster remaining was far more powerful than any of the low level monsters from before.

I could probably take most of them one-on-one, but these guys would be way too much for everyone else.

“Ahhhhh, I just want to drink a bunch of beer and relax!”

“I get what you mean, Dust. Working so hard like this, I’m going to become a proper upstanding man at this rate.”

“Dust, Keith, what’s so bad about that? We are almost done, so just hang in there for a while longer. After the war is over, I won’t interfere with your indulgent and depraved lifestyle for a while.”

Normally, Lynn would kick our asses and force us to help. It’s rare for her to have such an attitude.

Keith and I looked at each other, then bumped fists and laughed.

“Don’t forget what you said! When this is over, I’m not doing anything for awhile!”

“No taking it back. Dust, we’ll have a great time afterwards!”

“Alright, I give up... I really can’t do anything with you two.”

“I’m glad we got them motivated, but is it really okay...”

Lynn and Taylor, the two serious party members, sighed deeply. I wasn’t sure what they said, but I chose to ignore them.

“Okay, let’s get back to work. Can you guys still fight?”

After I asked the other adventurers, everyone raised their weapons.

“Of course! I’m only just warmed up!”

“There’s only a few of them left now, we can still beat them.”

“Beer always tastes better after hard work.”

Although they were all bruised and battered, everyone was still full of bravado.

They’re probably barely holding on, but it’s fine. If you’re not going to put on a good front here, then when are you going to do it?

Several adventures were unable to fight and were sent back to Axel for treatment, but I recognized all the remaining ones.

These guys... Were all regular customers of the Succubus Shop. In fact, that shop was the most important motivator amongst the warriors of Axel.

After the morale boost, we approached the enemy base camp directly.

The other party seemed to be planning to fight us head-on, staying still and waiting for our arrival.

The enemy troops numbered only about fifty, so we outnumbered them; however, the enemy's monsters were all incredibly strong.

If this was a quest, every single one of them would've required a party of veteran adventurers to defeat. Seeing these sorts of odds, most people would be terrified.

Thinking of that, I turned around and looked back, only to find the adventurers all smiling arrogantly.

"Hey, hey, I'm really eager to fight. I'm so excited, I'm shaking all over."

"Ha, even now, you're still such a novice. Look at me, I'm not scared, you could learn a thing or two!"

"You look like you're about to cry out of fear! I haven't been scared once!"

...No, they were scared half to death.

I can't blame them. To be honest, I also—

"I really want to go home."

"What are you saying!? You can't give up here."

When I muttered this, Lynn immediately yelled back at me.

Complaining wouldn't change anything, that much was clear.

I left the shaky adventurers in place and walked forward. Taylor, Keith, and Lynn followed behind.

"You guys can stay behind me."

“Don’t be ridiculous. I said I wasn’t going to let you steal the limelight.”

“Yeah, as the captain and a Crusader, how could I cower and hide behind someone else?”

“We’re a party. We gotta be together wherever we go.”

I’ve got one reliable group of party members.

As long as I had them backing me up, I could keep going forward, no matter how strong the enemy was.

I slung my spear over my shoulder and took a big step forward.

“Humans, do not tread any further. If you come any closer, I’ll be forced to attack you.”

A loud voice shook my whole body, so I stopped.

The enemy’s formation split in two, and a human figure appeared in front of us.

It was a wonderful beauty who looked out of place on this battlefield. She raised a charming smile and looked at me with a cold gaze that chilled my spine.

She wore a deep V-neck white shirt on her upper body and a long skirt with slits on it on her lower. The fullness of her chest and posterior was impeccable.

Just looking at her, I could tell she’s completely my type. I wanted to ask her to sleep with me for a night, but judging from her statement... It seems she was the commander-in-chief of the Demon King’s Army.

“Beautiful onee-san, are you the leader?”

“Yes human... Oh, that human man has an enticing aura. Just looking at him makes me hot and aroused. If you’re willing to switch sides, I will save your life and make you very satisfied every day.”

Was she joking and teasing me? I looked at her suspiciously, but it didn’t seem to be a joke. Was she serious?

At the idea of being seduced by such a beautiful onee-san, my heart began to waver.

“Hey, do I look like a man who will be deceived by good looks?”

“That’s exactly what you look like.” x3

“You guys stay out of this!”

My party and the adventurers had all responded so quickly in unison.

“It’s a great proposal, but I’ll pass. But if you want, I can rub your chest a few times— Gahh!”

I felt a shock on the back of my head. I didn’t need to look to know that it must have been Lynn hitting me with her magic wand.

Just how many times does she need to hit me before she’s satisfied?

“This human is very funny. Oh my, how rude of me, I haven’t given you my name yet. I’m the commander-in-chief in charge of the attack on Axel. My name is Rouzelli. Pleased to meet you... Or not. Anyway, you’ll die here.”

Since her voice and manner were attractive, I didn’t really want to attack her at all. However, when she revealed her threatening aura that made her previous sexy aura immediately vanish, I couldn’t help but swallow nervously.

“Huh— but this was quite the surprise. I heard this was the town of beginner adventurers, but to think that such a town could reduce our

forces by this much. If this continues, I won't be able to show myself before His Majesty the Demon King and the Generals. So, although it's a little embarrassing, will you please just die miserably with the residents of this town?"

As she spoke, she tried to come off as charming and sexy by tracing her fingers along the curves of her body. I was reminded of a certain someone whose eyes would light up and say 'that's really worthy of reference!'

"That's really worthy of reference!"

That's right, she'd sound just like that.

"Wait... Why are you here?"

"Huh? No one was there just now, right?"

Lynn and my other party members didn't seem to know how she got there either.

Loli Succubus had appeared next to me and was eagerly observing Rouzelli.

"I finished spreading rumors, so I came back. I felt like if I stayed there any longer, I'd have gotten caught up in fighting on their side. That woman is really sexy! One day, I want to also become that kind of attractive and beautiful woman."

"That'd be impossible."

"Grr!"

After I pointed out the obvious, she puffed up her cheeks and glared at me.

"Oh, what a cute little girl. Although she's not much for reinforcements... where did you come from?"

“Ah, I came out of the ground.”

“The ground?” x 5

I looked at the ground where Loli Succubus pointed, but I could only see dirt. I looked harder, but didn't see anything special about the ground.

“Hey, what do you mean ‘from the ground’ —”

I was about to ask, but the soil in front of me suddenly swelled into a familiar shape.

“Fuhahaha! It is actually Moi! Oh, I do enjoy this type of surprised negative emotion.”

With that familiar laugh, the dirt changed into a familiar form — a demon wearing a mask.

“Sir! What are you doing appearing like this? Ah, forget it, but is it really okay for you to be seen by the Demon King's Army?”

“Ah, yes...”

“Th-that mask is, Va-Va-Vanir-Sama!”

Rouzelli screamed as soon as she saw Sir Vanir... Wait a scream?

I glanced at her and found her face pale and fixed with a look of extreme terror.

“Sir, what did you do to her?”

“Who knows, Moi does not recall seeing her before.”

Although his masked face wasn't exactly easy to read, he seemed to really not know her. Rouzelli just kept pointing at Sir, opening and closing her mouth like a fish.

That clearly wasn't going to get us anywhere, so I started asking some questions.

"Sir doesn't seem to know you, but you seem to know him. How is that?"

"He doesn't remember? After everything he did... In the Demon King's Castle, every day he cruelly toyed with us!"

Rouzelli was starting to get fired up. The other monsters were also holding their heads and shaking as if they were distressed with her.

It didn't seem to be a lie or a joke. Sir Vanir really had done something incredible.

"Describing it like that is an exaggeration. After all, even in the Demon King's Castle, Moi needs to eat. Moi would pretend to be Wiz or another popular female general and lure them into the bedroom before revealing it was a trick. Or, give out high-calorie pills disguised as diet pills and reveal the truth a month later. That is all Moi recalls."

"That's exactly it, aaah!"

"Sir, that must be it!"

Rouzelli and I screamed at the same time.

Sir tilted his head and pretended to not understand, but I could tell he was faking it.

"Vanir-san, that really does sound like too much. Also, as a woman, that sort of prank doesn't sit well with me. Wait, did you say you pretended to be me?"

"Do you have any idea how hard it was to lose all that weight!?! Ahhhhhhhhhhh! Even Wiz-sama is here!?"

Seeing Wiz poke her head out from behind Sir, Rouzelli screamed again.

She was quite the screamer, it was getting a little absurd.

“Long time no see. I remember you; you’re Rouzelli, a candidate for General. How are you doing?”

Wiz seemed to remember her and greeted her kindly.

“Wait, how could you two be here?”

“Because Moi works at a shop in this town with this incompetent shopkeeper.”

“In this town? Working at a shop? Huh?”

I wondered if she didn’t understand, or didn’t want to believe it. Rouzelli looked around in a panic suspiciously.

I decided to ignore her behavior for now.

“Sir, let’s get back to my question. Is it really okay if your identity is completely exposed?”

“About this matter, Moi has concluded that there is no need for concern.”

“Since Vanir-san doesn’t think it matters, I’m also relieved even though I haven’t asked him to clarify why yet. What are you going to do?”

Wiz simply believed in Sir Vanir’s confidence and followed him.

....At this time, my heart was filled with an ominous feeling. Why would Wiz just believe it? She had spent a lot of time with Sir, so it may have been something I wouldn’t understand.

“Must thou even ask such a question? Moi shall annihilate this group and leave not even a single survivor of the Demon King’s Army in this world.”

“Ah, so that’s it... Wait, what? Are you really going to do that?”

“So that’s why you don’t care that they know your identity, you really are incredible!”

When I heard Sir’s proposal, I was immediately relieved, but my party members had mixed expressions. I couldn’t tell if they were surprised or dumbfounded.

“...Vanir-san and Wiz-san were members of the Demon King’s Army before? Although I could have guessed about Vanir-san, I would never have suspected Wiz.”

“If what he just said is true, does it mean they’re going to betray the Demon King and help us?”

“I don’t get this at all.”

This new information seemed to throw them all into chaos.

I was curious about how the other adventurers were taking this, so I turned to look... But they weren’t listening. To be precise, they were far too busy to listen.

“I’m not sure why, but the monsters all seem to be in pain, this is our chance! Let’s kill them now!”

“Use magic and arrows to crush them!”

“Hey, fight! We can’t lose here!”

The adventurers had entered battle mode while saying stuff that made me question which side was the Demon King’s army. Everyone was fighting desperately, paying no attention to us.

The monsters also seemed to be aware of the difference in the atmosphere, and they were getting ready to receive us from a distance... No, that's not right, they were trying to escape from Sir Vanir in the chaos.

I could tell because, even though they were fighting, the monsters would sneak a peek at Sir Vanir from time to time. This definitely hurt their focus in battle.

Perfect. Thanks to this, the adventurers could fight evenly with the monsters. Thank you, Sir Vanir.

"Vanir-sama, Wiz-sama, will you really stand on the side of the humans?"

"Well, Moi merely joined the Demon King after his repeated requests, just to pass the time. Moreover, Moi is now a *former* General, and as such, a free agent. That inept shopkeeper is a General in name only who is responsible for maintaining the barrier."

"Yes, this is the case. My contract is to remain neutral and not interfere."

"Then, since these people are enemies of the Demon King's Army, wouldn't siding with them violate the contract?"

Rouzelli's words were reasonable. They were now interfering everywhere, and their position was far from neutral.

"Yes, since I am assisting Axel, perhaps that can't be considered neutral anymore."

"Then the current situation is considered a breach of contract?"

Rouzelli, who had been full of despair, seemed to think this development would be beneficial to her, her expression suddenly changing to hopeful.

“However, the condition for me to maintain the barrier and remain neutral is that only adventurers or knights in combat occupations should be attacked.”

“We haven’t dealt with anyone other than adventurers! So—”

Rouzelli trailed off. A chill released from Wiz’s body surged, making her speechless.

Since we were so close, we were also affected by this blast.

“Ugh! It hurts! Quick, let’s hug together to keep warm.”

“Get away from me. You can bear with it for a little while!”

“Although I typically don’t reject beautiful women even if they’re cold to me, this is a little too much.”

“...Hey, can you guys not hide behind me?”

We used Taylor, the most burly figure, as a shield and hid behind him.

Although he complained, Taylor didn’t usually have much chance to shine. This was a good opportunity for him to be useful. He should be thanking me.

“Just die miserably with the residents of this town.’ Isn’t that what you said just now? This town is very important to me, and I will not let you hurt my shop or my precious customers!”

The cold vortex of Wiz-centered madness was getting bigger and bigger as we scrambled to get away from it. If we stayed here we’d be turned into icicles.

“It’s been a long time since she acted like the Ice Witch.”

Sir Vanir said with his arms wrapped around us. The surface of his body was all frosted.

Wait, when did he escape?

“Wiz actually has such a terrifying side.”

“She used to lose her temper often, and she would get furious whenever Moi teased her. She would constantly come to me to vent intense negative feelings; it was like a high-quality bento delivery.”

Sir’s analogy was a little unnerving.

Putting what happened in the past aside, Wiz was now willing to seriously take part in this war, for which I was really grateful. Our combat power had greatly increased, as seen from the Explosion magic and this current situation.

Sir Vanir seemed to have been bought by Luna and was willing to help, so he would definitely win.

“It’s our victory, it seems.”

“Delinquent adventurer, this kind of careless remark seems to be called ‘raising a flag’. Kazuma said that such cursed remarks would attract phenomena completely opposed to the content...”

“Ah, I’ve also heard Kazuma talk about that. But, it seems pretty obvious who’s going to win here.”

Exposed to the biting cold, Rouzelli’s body surface had been frosted over, leaving her trembling. Wiz moved slowly closer to her.

No matter how you looked at it, it was a sure win.

“If this phenomenon lasts a little longer, Wiz won’t lose, but don’t underestimate her. She will most definitely commit some outrageous

mistakes... After all, it is the destitute shopkeeper who is the reason for her own poverty.”

“Sir, you think too much... Hey, did Wiz suddenly fall down?”

The blizzard stopped abruptly, and Wiz was lying face down on the ground.

Huh? There was no warning at all, what was going on?

My thoughts couldn't keep up with this unexpected sight at all, making me speechless, but Rouzelli, who had been intimidated by Wiz, seemed to be the most surprised of everyone. She stared at the immobile Wiz.

“She really didn't think about it in advance. How can she make herself burn with anger with the name Ice Witch? Moi can't bear this troublesome matter.”

Sir Vanir sighed, as if only he understood the situation.

“Wiz suddenly fainted, how could this happen?”

“The Explosion magic is to blame. Using that magic consumed a lot of her mana, and even more was used up in the previous offensive and defensive battles. As such, unleashing more magic will lead to this sort of consequence.”

Ah— of course! The Explosion Girl also couldn't move immediately after finishing her spell. Although Wiz had more magical power than Megumin, the previous battles should have almost exhausted her reserves.

“I... I'm not quite sure why, but that's one less threat!”

After recovering, Rouzelli felt relieved and became arrogant once again.

“Wiz may be out of the fight, but we still have Sir Vanir here, did you forget? You have no chance of winning! Go on Sir, show her what you got!”

After I finished what I wanted to say, I gave the scene over to Sir Vanir.

“Tossing all the responsibility over to someone else, how despicable!”

“Even I’m not that much of a scumbag.”

“I can’t believe we’re in the same party.”

My party began talking badly about me behind my back.

When I looked back, they immediately looked away and moved in the other direction... Don’t pretend you don’t know me!

“It doesn’t matter if you want Moi to clean up, Moi can’t do *that*.”

“Sir, come on. Don’t be lazy, please help. Wait, what do you mean unable to do that... Oh, so that’s it.”

I looked in the direction Sir had indicated with his chin and saw Rouzelli shrink her body into a trembling ball and begin to grow a pair of wings from her back.

Her swelling body tore her clothes from the inside, revealing a body covered in bright red scales and two horns sticking out of her head.

To most, this scene would have been quite amazing, but to me, it was actually unremarkable.

Huge wings grew from Rouzelli’s body that had now swelled several times in size. What appeared before my eyes was one of the strongest monsters known to the world — a dragon.

Judging by the scarlet scales, it's a red dragon.

It rose into the sky with its wings open and deftly hovered in mid-air.

"In the air, even Vanir-sama cannot attack me. It's humiliating to take this form in front of humans, but you can consider it a parting gift. After many years, dragons can learn the ability to assume a human form. Are you so scared that you can't speak? I can't blame you... Huh? Why don't you have any reaction? Couldn't you at least be a little more desperate and scream in fright?"

"Even if you say that..."

I replied impatiently to the voice that I heard not in my ears, but echoing within my mind.

Looking at this dragon, although she was very different in appearance and speaking fluently, my only thought was 'Faitfore will be able to speak clearly like this in the future.'

My friends had seen the process of Faitfore changing from a human to a dragon several times, and naturally they were used to it.

"Fine, no matter, anyway, you'll surely become afraid sooner or later. Try to attack me with magic or bows and arrows. Any attack is no match for my scales."

Keith and Lynn tried releasing arrows and magic. Even considering that their power was weakened by the distance, Rouzelli's hard scales blocked everything, not showing any harm at all.

"Hehe, there is nothing you can do now. Long-range attacks don't work, and you can't come closer. Come now, beg for mercy... Hey, why did that young girl suddenly take off her clothes?"

Rouzelli felt she had the upper hand and gave a great speech, but Faitfore ignored it and took off her clothes.

Lynn and the others hurriedly erected a human wall around Faitfore, so no one could see her.

“Oh well, it’s because otherwise her clothes will get torn, which would upset her. After all, she seems to like that dress very much. She’s even folding the clothes. Good job, Faitfore.”

“Un, Lynn taught me to do that”

“This kid does learn quickly.”

Even in this situation, she can take off her clothes and neatly fold them. She really grew up. I patted her head as a reward, and she squinted happily.

“How can you act so carefree! Do you even know what’s going on now? How dire things are?”

Red Dragon asked, tilting its head.

Even though we were very exposed to attack, it had not attacked us yet. It really believed there was nothing we could do.

“Because there’s nothing to worry about. Everything will be alright. Sorry to keep you waiting so long.”

I turned around and stabbed the bottom of the spear into the ground, smiling maliciously.

Strong wind gusts came from behind me, and dust was blown all around.

After the wind stopped, Faitfore, who had turned into a dragon, appeared.

She unfurled big white wings and roared into the sky.



“Rahhhhh!”

“How did a white dragon appear in such a place!?”

‘She needs to be surprised quite a few times a day to be satisfied, huh?’ I thought and jumped onto Faitfore’s back, but Lynn also jumped up and sat behind me.

“We’ll also need support with long-range attacks,” Keith protested.

“I’ll be more relieved if Lynn is with me.”

Not only would her magic be comforting, but her presence would also help me too.

“Then I want to go too!”

“At times like these, think before you speak, Keith.”

Keith also wanted to jump on, but Taylor grabbed his neck.

After pulling Keith off, Taylor held him down with one hand and gave me the shield he usually used with the other hand.

“This is all I can do. I expect you to come back.”

“Ah, dammit! I’m letting you have the best chance to shine, so make sure you kick her ass, you hear?”

“Leave it to me. I’ll leave the rest of the enemies to you, Keith, Taylor.”

I took out the spear, Taylor took out his sword, Keith took out his bow, and we all overlapped the points of our weapons.

Faitfore fluttered her wings vigorously and flew into the air.

The red dragon flew higher and higher, as if to escape, and we followed after her too. We wanted to be seen by as few adventurers as possible, so this suited us just fine.

After flying some distance from the battlefield, the red dragon finally stopped and looked at us.

“So, you can actually keep up with my speed. I never thought I’d meet a rare white dragon in such a place, but I was even more surprised that there is a human that can easily control it. Do you have the rare job, the Dragon Knight?”

“You guessed it. Although, it’d be more accurate to say that was what I *used* to be.”

There was really no reason to hide that now, so I just told the truth.

“Oh? A Dragon Knight. I have indeed heard of a knight in the neighboring country who was the youngest to become a Dragon Knight.”

“Yep, that’s me.”

“I knew it! I heard that you are a dragon tamer who could charm any dragon. That’s why I feel hot in my chest when I see you. Now, how about you stop riding that white dragon and ride me instead?”

Although it tried to tempt me with a charming voice, the dragon-shaped body that it was trying to seduce me with made me unsure exactly how to react.

Also, Faitfore turned her head towards me with protesting eyes, which made me really concerned.

“Sorry, my partner is the only one for me, I’m not about to cheat on her with any other dragon— Pfft, ah! Don’t lick my face! Hey, I’ll lose my balance, stop it!”

Faitfore seemed to be satisfied with my answer judging by how she licked my face with her big tongue, completely blocking my view.

“Oh I got rejected. It doesn’t really matter, the law of the dragon race is for the strong to eat the weak, and so all must obey the strong. I will defeat you and that girl and made you mine by sheer force of will.”

“I don’t hate strong women, but there’s already someone I love”

I don’t need to say anymore to get the point across. She’s right here—

“Oh? This is news to me. You actually have a lover?”

“Gah?”

Why are you both looking at me like that? Of course I’m talking about you two!

It would be too embarrassing for me to explain it clearly here. To hide my embarrassment, I rubbed their heads rudely.

Faitfore was very happy, but Lynn stared at me angrily.

“What are you doing? My hair’s all messed up now!”

“You sure are an insensitive woman!”

“What do you mean!”

I figured she would have understood. I confessed to her before, so uh... Huh? Lynn’s neck was red. Is she also hiding her shyness?

“Can you be serious? Don’t flirt in front of me. We’re fighting!”

“Sorry.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Uuu—”

We apologized after being reprimanded.

This dragon seemed to be the type that could see peoples' faces and communicate. That being the case, I thought that I might be able to negotiate with it.

“So uh, you're sure you're not gonna retreat? You do realize that even if you beat me, you'll have to face Sir Vanir, right?”

“That, uh — well, I actually do really want to run away with my tail between my legs, but I can't do that. That's the trouble with being in charge. The Demon King's army is doing its utmost to capture the Capital and Axel at the same time. If I can't win now, it'll cause all sorts of problems.”

The Dragon sighed and held her cheeks in her hands. It was a surreal scene.

“You could always just leave the Demon King's army. Since you're a powerful dragon, I can help introduce you to other jobs.”

After all, I know better than anyone which countries are looking for Dragon Knight candidates.

Rouzelli can communicate fluently, so she would be easy to control.

“Dragons who don't have lairs are usually looked down upon, and it's very easy to live in the Demon King's Army. And I've killed so many people... It would be too embarrassing if I finally surrendered to humans.”

“I see. Well, I guess it can't be helped. I'll do my best to defeat you!”

Rouzelli seems to have strong reservations in her heart; it would be useless to talk anymore.

“Oh, how nice, you really... He’s a good man. Come on, it doesn’t matter who wins or loses. Let’s fight to our hearts content!”

We separated a distance and faced each other head-on.

The Red Dragon was about twice the size of Faitfore. Although Faitfore had superior speed, in a contest of strength she would have no chance of winning at all.

As a Red Dragon, Rouzelli would have the Fire attribute. So she would have fire resistance and would only be slightly injured if attacked with fire breath.

On the flip-side, we had to pay close attention to fire attacks. Faitfore has fire resistance, and I would benefit from that through our contract. However, Lynn was a different matter. If she got caught up in a breath attack, she’d be incinerated.

“Make sure to avoid her Fire Breath at all cost.”

I patted Faitfore on the neck, brought my mouth to her ear, and gave her instructions.

She seemed a little puzzled at first, but after seeing Lynn behind me, she nodded vigorously. She’s a pretty smart kid, I could see she understood.

Right at this moment, Rouzelli opened her mouth wide, almost as if she’d guessed my worries.

Flames emerged from her mouth.

“Faitfore—!”

I just managed to turn Faitfore aside in time to dodge the flame breath.

We flew past our opponent, and I immediately turned around behind her.

“She’s weakest from behind!”

I wanted to stab my spear into her weak back, but she flicked her tail hard at me, so I immediately went on the defensive.

If a human took a blow from a dragon head on, he wouldn’t get away lightly. I tilted the shield Taylor gave me to receive the blow, letting it slide off the shield.

Despite that, a shockwave ran through my body. My contract with Faitfore had given me some part of her powers, so I was able to withstand it.

“Wow! You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m okay.”

Although I answered Lynn in a relaxed tone, I was becoming more and more anxious.

Only dragons who have lived for a long time can transform into a human. I was mentally prepared from the beginning for this to be a difficult fight...but Rouzelli was even more powerful than I’d anticipated.

She outclassed Faitfore in every way except speed.

I managed to make a few attacks, but they were either blocked by the tail or deflected by the red scales.

Lynn casted spells at her whenever she was able, but Rouzelli showed no signs of pain. Her magic resistance was incredibly high. Anything short of a high level magic spell from a Crimson Demon would be powerless against her.

The power gap is so great, could it be that she...

“Hey, aren’t you, like, super old?”

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! What are you saying all of sudden! See how shiny my scales are? I’m still young and spry!”

The Red Dragon started waving her hands in the air, protesting strongly.

Younger people don’t use the term ‘young and spry.

“Because the longer dragons live, the stronger they get. Since you’re so strong, I assumed you must be old.”

“Don’t say such rude things! That’s right, I may be considered a seasoned dragon, but the main reason I’m so strong is because of his Majesty the Demon King. Haven’t you heard? As long as His Majesty is alive, the power of his subordinates will increase greatly. If the Demon King was defeated, my ability would greatly decrease.”

“Uh, isn’t that kinda like cheating?”

“Dragons are already incredibly strong, so with that added bonus... No wonder she’s so powerful.”

I completely agreed with Lynn’s statement.

We could dodge her attacks and get within range to attack, but even then we couldn’t penetrate the scales. Although I wasn’t sure how much her power was strengthened by the Demon King, our only chance would be if she lost that added strength.

... But it was useless to hope for something so far-fetched.

“Hehe, where is that majestic attitude now? Come on, stab me with a spear.”

Because our attacks were all ineffective, Rouzelli got arrogant.

Shee hovered in mid-air and coaxed me with her index finger.

How dare she provoke me in such a hopeless situation!

“This, this bastard!”

“Hey, she’s just trying to provoke you, don’t be fooled. Calm down, calm down. Don’t worry, you can do it.”

Hearing the soft whispering voice in my ear, my raging anger suddenly faded.

This situation seemed... Familiar

It was when I first joined Lynn and her team.

* * *

At that time, I hadn’t completely lost my habits from being a knight. I misjudged the distance of an attack because I wasn’t used to my longsword. As a result, my partner was attacked and we fell into a crisis.

“Damn it, this is my fault! Run away! I’ll take care of this one and buy time for you to escape!”

Just when I was about to make up for my failure by charging the monster, I fell forward from a sharp impact on my back.

“Ow! Hey, what are you doing!”

Looking back, I saw, with hands on her hips and an angry face, Lynn.

“New Guy, don’t try to be a hero. You used to be alone right?”

“That’s, that’s right...”

She brought her face right in front of me; I could feel her warm breath.

“Remember, we’re a team. If you can’t win alone, ask a party member for help; if you fail, ask a party member for help. On the other hand, if a party member is in danger... You understand what I’m saying?”

Here, she clapped her hands down on my shoulders and smiled at me.

“Let’s do it together. Don’t worry, you can do it!”

* * *

“Hey, why are you in a daze at a time like this? Snap out of it!”

Lynn’s scolding brought my consciousness flying back from the past.

“You saved me again.”

“Again?”

Don’t you remember Lynn?

“Just talking to myself. Okay, let’s attack again. Lynn, I’ll need your help.”

“Finally, my turn to show off. I’ll show you I’m not a woman who needs to be protected. Right, Faitfore?”

“Hoooo!”

These two were really starting to get along pretty well.

As a counterattack, Faitfore spit out flames of her own, but Rouzelli didn't seem to take them seriously and seemed as if she was going to go right through them.

"Just as I expected, Freeze Gust!"

After Rouzelli passed through the flames, a cold white mist appeared in front of her.

She collided with the cloud. Since Red Dragons have magical resistance to fire, this cold air should be effective.

"Graaaaaah! You really got me! Where did you go!?"

The impact of the cold air had stopped Rouzelli's movements while she shook her head and yelled fiercely. We took this opportunity to move to a higher position than her.

...What's with that reaction just now? Cold may be her weakness, but her reaction was exaggerated. She may be trying to deliberately draw us in by making it seem like she was weakened. Although I remained skeptical, she seemed really uncomfortable.

"What, that's strange. The magic worked."

The caster herself was also taken aback.

We could see the red dragon looking around in panic below us, and it seemed every movement was much slower than before. Did the cold drop her body temperature?

I don't think so. It seems that her overall state was worse than before, so our magic may have begun to work.

Deterioration means... It was impossible... Perhaps it was!

"Have you succeeded?... Kazuma!"

“What are you so happy about, this is no time to be laughing!”

Did I really laugh? If I really had guessed right then this was a great opportunity created by my best friend for me.

“Lynn, hold on tight!”

Faitfore quickly dove, head down, almost falling straight towards the ground.

“Kya...”

I heard Lynn let out a short shout behind me, but it seemed she was able to close her mouth.

Lynn tightened her grip on my belly, showing how desperately she was enduring the fear and speed of falling.

Although the wind blasted against my face, I kept my eyes open and stared at a certain point on the red dragon’s back.

The only scale on a Dragon that grows upside down, the *Gyaku* (Inverse) scale, is the weak spot of any dragon. I brought my spear down with all my might on that scale.

The spear penetrated deeply into the dragon’s body

Rouzelli immediately lost her strength and fell to the ground.

Both the adventurers and the Demon King’s Army saw the dust and smoke from the impact of Rouzelli slamming into the ground. After realizing that their commander had been defeated, the monsters began to retreat one after another.

After confirming that the crisis was resolved, we chose to land in a place hidden from the battlefield. I carried Faitfore, who was back in human form, back to the front gate where my party and the other adventurers were waiting.

Part 4

“Hey— are you guys alright?”

I waved my hands and ran towards the group of adventurers.

Although everyone was sitting on the ground exhausted, most likely from the sense of accomplishment from protecting the town, they seemed to be in good moods... Well, at least they were before seeing me.

They all frowned or gaped at me.

“You ran away again at the last moment! How dare you show your face here! The enemy weakened all of a sudden, so we managed to make it through somehow, but we had a really hard time with it, you know!?”

Even the enemies here have weakened. Kazuma, you really succeeded.

“You always show up only once the situation is safe... Dust, you trash, scum, evil devil!”

“You’re trembling, even though you were hiding somewhere safe, you’re still afraid?!”

Seeing that the group was alright made me happy, but they continued to curse at me.

They had no idea how much work I put in behind their backs!

“I’m trembling because I’m so angry with you! Who are you calling afraid, huh? You don’t know how much I’ve contributed secretly! Taylor, Keith, tell them of my heroic deeds!”

I threw the topic to my two party members, but they just shared a look and sighed deeply.

“Yes, um, you really worked hard.”

“Yeah, you did great, okay?”

“That’s all you have to say? Come on, now’s the time to praise me!”

After I yelled at my party members who gave such lame responses, they leaned forward and whispered.

“...Dust, if you want to hide who you and Faitfore really are, we can’t really talk about what you did.”

“Yeah, to praise you while hiding that is impossible.”

When I heard that, I was speechless.

To proclaim my heroic deeds, I would have to reveal my true identity.

I certainly don’t want outsiders to know the Dragon Knight’s past, but protecting Faitfore is much more important. The White Dragon is a rare and valuable species. If her identity was exposed, she would definitely be targeted by thieves.

Putting Faitfore first, I decided to swallow my pride.

“Don’t lower your head, tell us what you did now!”

That’s right, even though they had no right to say these things, I had to endure it.

“Don’t go silent because you can’t think of a reasonable excuse! You’re usually so talkative, but now you shut up! Coward!”

Patience...

“That’s why women don’t like you. Of course, your attitude is probably why you’re still a virgin.”

.....

“Who are you calling a virgin! You’re all a bunch of nasty bastards! Well, you’ve all been tricked into this war! All you women who thought you could go confess your ‘feelings’ to Kazuma and leech off of his success for life, I got you! That was just a rumor I started. Idiots, morons, you fickle women deserve to be tricked! Now you can come crawling back to all us men with ‘bad attitudes.’ Oh, and as for you guys, I also lied about all those teasing dreams! How does it feel to have been horny because of a plan that I made? Ah hahahahaha!”

Ah, that felt great. After I had said everything I wanted to say, I felt much better.

After my counterattack, everyone was stunned speechless.

“Humph, why are you still gaping at me... Hey, wait, we already beat the Demon King’s Army, so stop pulling out your weapons. A celebration is no place for violence.”

Everyone drew their weapons and began to inch closer to me.

“Wait, wait, I was wrong. I’ll reflect on it! Can’t we talk about this? I’m against violence. How about we all get a drink!”

With my furious pleading, everyone seemed to calm down a bit. They stopped, put down their weapons, and heaved a collective sigh.

“You’re just like Kazuma, your only gift is annoying others...”

“Hey, don’t confuse me with him. Kazuma does it unconsciously, I did it on purpose.”

I clearly explained the difference between myself and Kazuma, but then I heard the sound of metal sliding on metal.

Adventurers were redrawing their sheathed swords.

Then they all stared at me, took a deep breath, and said,
“You’re even worse!”

Epilogue

EPILOGUE



Several hours have passed since the siege of Axel.

Despite facing down such a huge battle, the town was filled with the usual hustle and bustle. Even the severely injured have been healed by the priests and were now happily reveling in the celebratory banquet.

If this town has something that could be called its 'style', this was definitely it.

If there's one thing that concerns me, though, it'd be a certain strange rumour that's started circulating throughout the adventurers.

"I swear! I saw two dragons fighting in the sky! A red dragon and a white dragon were fighting an epic battle! I'm not lying!"

"I saw it too. And there was someone riding on the white dragon too! It must be the legendary Dragon Knight here to save us!"

A few adventurers were passionately talking about such tales to their friends, though the ones they were talking to seemed to just be giving them lip service and didn't seem convinced at all.

It should all be forgotten in a few days.

We were sitting in our usual spot at the guild, drinking wine while surrounded by such gossip.

“I wonder what Kazuma and the others are doing now? Did they manage to reach the Demon King’s Castle after all?”

Taylor muttered under his breath to no one in particular.

“Kazuma said he only wanted to bring Aqua back, but if the past is any indication, he probably got caught up in something big and they all ended up getting involved to take down the Demon King.”

Keith speculated in between mouthfuls of beer and food.

“It’s possible. Then, he’ll probably fight the Demon King with underhanded tricks while complaining the whole way. If that’s the case, Dust, do you think he has a chance of winning?”

Lynn threw the topic to me, making me think for a while.

Could Kazuma fight the Demon King? Well...

“In theory, he should have no chance of winning, but he always seems to find a way. We’ve taught him all our skills, and he has always had good luck.”

Despite saying that, I sincerely believed that Kazuma would be able to successfully defeat the Demon King.

If my prediction was wrong and something unexpected happened, I could always help out and rescue him with Faitfore.

Speaking of, what was my reliable partner doing? I looked over to see Faitfore digging into a large meal in the form of a young girl.

Well she worked hard today, so she can eat as much as she wished.

“Kazuma needs to come back safely and return the precious sword that the Hero used...”

“Oh, right! If my best friend becomes the hero, the value of the sword I lent him would be worth a small fortune. I’ll be able to live a leisurely life after I sell it”

“You don’t have the slightest intention of selling it...”

“Lynn, did you say something?”

“Not particularly.”

She was so happy just now, so why did her mood sour all of a sudden? I never understand women.

“If Kazuma defeats the Demon King, he’ll become a Legendary Hero. It’s kinda crazy to think about.”

“True. If that happens, he’d become a completely unreachable existence for us.”

Keith and Taylor stared off into space with troubled looks.

“Ha, don’t be ridiculous. If he really did defeat the Demon King, he’ll just brag about it and get carried away until we get annoyed and start a big brawl. That’s how it always goes.”

Kazuma definitely wouldn’t change much. If he changed at all, he’d just be more obnoxiously confident.

I tried to imagine that scene, but surprisingly it didn’t piss me off that much. It would still be annoying though.

He might be involved in a battle to decide the fate of the world right now, but we are just casually drinking.

The adventurers continued to drink in the guild throughout the day, getting gradually rowdier.

“We really did great this time! It’s not like the Dullahan and the Destroyer when we had to rely on Kazuma.”

“Yeah, this time we can finally hold our heads high and say ‘We won this battle!’”

The team of adventurers nearby began to brag loudly.

The battle of Axel was won as a result of everyone working together. Though I was certain I played the most important role, it’s better not to mention that.

It’s fine to let them bask in the limelight.

“Oh, everyone did well, except for a certain someone who was slacking off!”

“I know, and he claims to be the representative of the town! Ahahahahaha!”

“Hey, hey, stop talking. The coward is going to cry, you know? Gyahahahaha!”

I instantly knew who those words were intended for. They were looking my way with those infuriating faces of theirs while laughing away.

“You bastards! You’re still saying that? Alright, I’ll make your bodies understand just how much I’ve done for this town!”

“You’re still saying that!? I still haven’t forgotten how you shattered my dreams so cruelly!”

“I’ll never forget how you led me on with those cruel tricks of yours!”

I picked up my chair as they approached me with angry mutterings.

“Alright, that’s enough! This is a celebration party, so don’t do anything stupid now. You don’t want to get knocked out and wake up to find you missed the entire party, do you?”

“Yeah, everyone’s having a good time, don’t ruin it for them.”

After being scolded and preached at by Lynn and Taylor respectively, they reluctantly returned to my seat.

“Ha, you deserved that.”

“Shut it, Keith! It’s not like you did much either! Ouch! That hurts! Don’t smack me on the head! What will you do if I become stupid!?”

“Hmph, as if you could get more stupid than you are right now.”

I grumbled at Lynn as she swung her wand, but she just snickered at me.

It wasn’t exactly the most loveable expression.

I thought the distance between us had shortened a bit after all this, but here we were, back to our normal relationship. But my feelings for her remained the same. Is that what they mean by falling head over heels for someone?

I slowly enjoyed my mug of beer while listening to Lynn’s nagging.

After a rowdy and raucous party, Lynn and I found ourselves alone in a square near the main gate. We were sitting on a bench staring up into the night sky.

.....How did we end up like this?

I said I was going outside to sober up, and Lynn, her face flush, said she was coming with me and followed me out.

So we walked casually in the middle of the night and made small talk... That's how we got here.

What exactly was she planning here?

I was trying to keep my cool while having a conversation, but I just can't get a read on Lynn.

Some people would've called this a good mood. However, I'm not proud of this, but I have absolutely no idea what to do in such a situation.

Sexual harassment I'm used to, but this tender atmosphere was new and terrifying.

I snuck a look at Lynn only to see her looking at me with innocent eyes and a flushed face.

Ah, I see, this expression must mean she's asking for a kiss! That's right, that's it! If I didn't kiss her now, what kind of man would I be?

I put a trembling hand on Lynn's shoulder.

Although she seemed a little surprised, she didn't resist. Seeing this, I closed my eyes.

"I want to finish what I couldn't before..."

This is going to work!

As I slowly moved my face closer, the moment our lips would touch—

"No—!—"

Suddenly, a white object yelled and jumped out of a nearby bush.

The thing slammed into my stomach hard.

“Gah! What’s going... Faitfore?”

“Huh? What are you doing here?”

The young girl was rubbing my stomach with her cheeks, Faitfore.

Lynn and I were dumbfounded at her sudden appearance.

“Hey, hey! Dust is my master. Lynn is bad! Grrrrr!”

Faitfore bared her teeth at Lynn.

“You-you got it wrong, I’m not gonna take him away!”

“Roarr.”

Lynn quickly tried to calm her down and held out her hand, but Faitfore just got ready to bite the hand.

This was the first time I’d seen her show anger in her human form... But thinking about it calmly, I couldn’t really put her at fault.

“Calm down, Faitfore, it’s nothing like that. But how did you get here anyway?”

“Umm, Cheese and the others chased after Dust, so I followed them.”

“I see, I see. Cheese... Keith, you mean?”

“Un, he’s over there...”

Faitfore immediately answered and pointed to the bush where she’d come from.

At that moment, I heard a rustle and couldn’t help but notice the branches shaking.

“Okay, whoever’s hiding there, come on out.”

After I shouted angrily into the bushes, the bush answered with a raspy “meow”.

“What the hell, it’s just a cat. Okay Lynn, squash it with magic.”

“Right, I’ll put it out of its misery.”

Lynn walked around my right side with a wicked grin and pointed her wand at the bush.

“Stop! Don’t do it, I’ll come out right now!”

Three figures rushed out of the bushes.

Standing before us were Keith, smiling awkwardly, Taylor, scratching his head idly, and Loli Succubus, holding a notepad with a gleam in her eye.

“I tried to stop them, I’m sorry.”

“I was really interested! It was a bit awkward, but that’s alright, please continue!”

“Just forget we’re here and go all the way... We’ll just come out and interrupt right before anything good happens.”

Only Taylor apologized, and the other two showed not even a sign of remorse.

I couldn’t make out what Keith said at the end, but that look on his face meant nothing good.

“What do you think I’m going to do after you completely ruined the mood? Right, Lynn?”

“Did it? I’m completely fine. If anything, maybe we should let them watch.”

“Ehh?”

This unexpected answer caused me to let out a cry in surprise. I looked to my left and saw Lynn smiling at me.

She closed her eyes like before and stood on her toes.

Although I was uncomfortable with the gazes all around me, I couldn't leave Lynn like that.

At that moment, I made up my mind and brought my face close to hers.

“Mwahahahaha! What a shame, it was actually Moi!”

...And Lynn's face shifted into Sir Vanir's right before my eyes.

“So many high-quality negative emotions! This shall offset some of the money you owe.”

Stunned in silence, I couldn't make a sound... Wait, the money I owed him was for asking him to help protect Axel, right?

“You already got 10 million Eris from Luna, isn't that good enough...”

“These are two different things.”

I was too careless at that time, how could I have made such a stupid deal. While I was wallowing in self-pity, someone placed a hand gently on my right shoulder. I turned my head and saw Lynn give me a wry smile.

That's right, Lynn was standing on my right, not my left. With everything going on, who would've noticed that!?

“What's the matter, delinquent adventurer, your whole body is shaking. Do you have a fever?”

“No, I don't even have the strength left to be angry...”

After Sir Vanir left contentedly, we returned to the guild together.

Faitfore seemed exhausted and fell asleep on my back.

Feeling that she was going to slide off, I stopped and carried her in my arms as I caught up with my friends.

“Let’s go have some drinks! Come on, it’ll be my treat, so don’t look so depressed.”

To think that Keith would offer to give me a treat. I suppose miracles do happen.

“You are undoubtedly the one who contributed most to the successful defence of Axel. The others might not know about it, but we do. Isn’t that enough?”

Even Taylor was acting nice; was he drunk? He must just be messing with me.

“Although his battle plans were underhanded and despicable, Dust-san did his best! It’s amazing!”

Loli Succubus nodded admiringly.

“What’s wrong with the three of you? Did you eat something strange?”

“You know... We were being nice because you won’t be able to be acknowledged by the others. You did really well this time.”

Lynn said with a broad smile as she lightly pressed her fist to my chest.

...So they really did care about me.

I voluntarily gave up my status as the youngest Dragon knight and was expelled from my country to become an adventurer... But there were still people who cared about me.

Even though I lived my life as I pleased, followed my instincts and got up to stupid things, my friends never left me. Not only that, but they willingly walked side by side with me.

I might be a fool who withdrew from his spot on the main stage, but I can still play the part in front of my friends, right?

“What are you standing around for? Come on, let’s go!”

I was stuck in place, but Lynn took my hand.

This wasn’t the time to immerse myself in the regrets of the past.

I am going to live my life in this town, alongside my beloved friends.



Afterword

In Konosuba Volume 17, while Kazuma and the others were fighting in the Demon King's castle, the town of Axel was attacked by the Demon King's Army at the same time. How will the adventurers of Axel stand up to an enemy they should have no chance of defeating? And what would Dust's role be!? Well, that's the story of this volume.

When I received the suggestion from my editor to write a spinoff for the Konosuba series, I jumped at the chance, and the pressure greatly exceeded my expectations. Just this once, I'd like to praise myself for finishing this story.

As I mentioned before, I am a big fan of the Konosuba series. I've read all the chapters in the web series and I've also bought all the volumes. This is why I had a hard time writing for this spinoff series.

I had considered simply borrowing the setting of Konosuba and introducing a bunch of my own characters to play around with, but after considering it from the perspective of a fan...

"I would rather know more about the existing characters and untold details behind existing stories than read a story about unknown characters written by a new author."

So, the only completely original character is Faitfore, who appeared in Volume 5. This is the only character I thought up from scratch and proposed.

From the feedback I've received from Volume 5, it seems to be received well by the readers, so that's a relief to me.

Looking back on the whole series, it really makes me feel a lot of emotions.

I rewrote and revised the first volume countless times, I had nothing but apprehension before the publication. I was so afraid of the reader's reactions that I couldn't even look myself up, and I spent my days with my stomach hurting out of anxiety.

The pressure had eased somewhat when it came time for Volume 2, so I decided to take a crack at Alcanretia. Yes, the headquarters of the Axis Cult. It was definitely a place I wanted to write about in a spinoff... But I didn't have the courage to do it with Volume 1.

In the third volume, I decided to let Iris, one of the more popular characters from the main series make an appearance. I've lost count of the number of times I read and reread Iris's dialogue scenes. If Iris didn't feel like Iris here, it would've been a big problem. It's with that in mind that I focused my efforts when I wrote that volume.

Volume 4 is where Loli Succubus took the center stage. In truth, the conversations between Dust and Loli Succubus are very easy to write.

Loli Succubus was originally only intended to play a small role, but when I got her involved with Dust she became really funny and enjoyable to write, and before I knew it she had become an indispensable main character. Also I really enjoyed having the chance to write Zesta!

Volume 5... Is the Volume where Faitfore made her first appearance. I've already touched on this earlier, so let's move on.

Volume 6 is where Princess Leonor made her debut. She made me work hard as a writer too. After all, she needed to be a character with a strong personality who could take even the current Dust for a spin. Incidentally... I also wrote a happy ending where Princess

Leonor and Dust could be together, but it wasn't adopted and later deleted and rewritten.

And now, the seventh volume!

Please enjoy the work, I put my all into this!

Lastly, I would like to render my thanks.

Akatsuki-Sensei, thank you veeeeeeery much! I have nothing but thanks for you letting me play around this freely. If I were to express all of my gratitude in words, it would fill out the entire afterword, so I'll leave it here. Also, Volume 17 was the most entertaining volume I ever read!

Mishima Kurone-Sensei, I've yet to see the illustrations for Volume 17 at time of writing, but I'm really looking forward to it! I wonder if that scene will be illustrated?

Yuuki Hagure-sensei, thank you for sticking by me to the last volume! I reviewed the illustrations you provided for the entire series, and all the characters were drawn so well that they filled my heart with nostalgia and joy...

Manager M-san, I've finished writing the spinoff for Konosuba!

To the people at Sneak Bunko, to the sales staff, to the design team, to the editors and the many others who assisted in getting this book published, thank you very much!

And my biggest thanks to all the readers who stayed with me to the end!

Hirukuma



**I HOPE WE CAN
MEET DUST AND HIS
FRIENDS AGAIN
SOMEDAY! THANK
YOU VERY MUCH!**

YUUKI HAGURE



**CONGRATULATIONS ON THE RELEASE
OF THE FINAL VOLUME OF THE DUST
SPINOFF. AT THE SAME TIME, THANK
YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK. STILL,
I'M SURE THEY WILL CONTINUE TO
RAISE A RUCKUS IN THE STREETS OF
AXEL. MY DEEPEST THANKS TO
HIRUKUMA-SENSEI WHO BROUGHT ALL
OF DUST'S ADVENTURES TO LIFE!**

**AKATSUKI
NATSUME**

**CONGRATULATIONS ON THE RELEASE OF DUST 7
AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE SPINOFF! THANK
YOU VERY MUCH, HIRUKUMA-SENSEI AND YUUKI
HAGURE-SENSEI! THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE
OPPORTUNITY TO ADMIRE HAGURE-SENSEI'S
ILLUSTRATIONS AND COVER ART IN EACH VOLUME!**

**MISHIMA
KURONE**

(Thanks to Kasen and Ulti for touching up the artwork)

Short story 1: Ingrained Manners

“What should we eat today? Lynn, what do you think?”

As usual, I called up the waitress with the biggest breasts in the guild’s tavern and asked for Lynn’s order.

“Hmm, well, I think I’ll have my usual salad.”

Lynn gently returned the menu to the table with a soft smile.

Her unexpected demeanour caused me, Taylor and Keith to freeze up.

We quietly traded glances. Everyone had looks of astonishment on their faces.

Once the salad was brought to her, she used a fork and knife to slice it up into small, bite-sized pieces, daintily brought those pieces to her mouth, and finally chewed slowly before swallowing.

She wiped the tiny drops of dressing that got stuck to her lips with a handkerchief and took a sip of water.

...This is creepy.

Normally, she’d just stick a fork in it and start gobbling it up without paying any mind to what others would think. What is she putting on airs for?

We wordlessly turned around on our seats and huddled together.

“W-What’s going on here? Is Lynn feeling sick today?”

“Her back is completely straight too, it’s like watching an entirely different person eat.”

“She didn’t get replaced by another person yet again, right?”

A shiver went down my spine upon hearing Keith's question.

He must be talking about Princess Leonor, who had been masquerading as Lynn just a short while ago.

Looking back at her, that style of eating certainly did seem like what the nobility and royalty did during official events. It is an elegant and pointlessly tedious way of eating.

Thinking that she had switched places again made me want to run away for an instant, but that idea was swiftly dispersed.

"That's not possible, I think. You know, apologies to Lynn, but, her chest..."

Taylor sheepishly said while glancing at Lynn's chest.

Keith and I followed his gaze... And that chest definitely belongs to Lynn. It's possible to increase your bust size with padding and the like, but there's no way she could've shrunk her chest down to that size.

"What's wrong, you guys? If you don't start eating soon, your food will get cold. Seeing grown men huddle together like that is kinda creepy, you know?"

And her mercilessly direct way of speaking is definitely Lynn's style.

Now that I look back again, she's back to her usual way of eating.

What was with her needlessly elegant way of eating just a moment ago?

"S-Say, Lynn, you don't have a fever, do you? Or maybe you're feeling under the weather... Ack, sorry!"

Apparently, Taylor was more taken aback than he seemed, as he accidentally toppled the mug of beer on the table.

It flowed toward Lynn and flooded the entire table. I braced myself for the cursing and burst of magic to follow... But nothing came.

Fearfully looking towards Lynn, she was simply smiling quietly.

“Oh, it’s fine, please don’t worry about it. Ah, no wait, erm, this is fine, right?”

“What happened to you!? Where did the usual violent and quick to anger Lynn go? Right now it’s like I’m talking to a normal, upper-class woman!”

I grabbed Lynn by the shoulders and shook her, and she simply smiled at me and stood up.

Then, she picked up her staff and pointed the tip at my head.

“Right, die.”

“W-W-Wait a minute! I’m joking! I’m joking, Lynn-sama.”

“Calm down, Lynn, he could’ve phrased it in a better way, but you still were acting strange.”

“Yeah, yeah, you’re not that refined a woman... Well, what Dust said!”

As we desperately tried to calm her down, Lynn slowly lowered her staff and sat back into her seat

With her crossed arms and her glowering looks, this is definitely the usual Lynn.

“I wondered what was going on... *Sigh*, you know, I had to pick up aristocratic manners on short notice back then, so whenever I let my guard down, it tends to show up. *‘If it isn’t properly ingrained into you, you’ll slip up,’* the butler said, so he made me practice all the time.”

With an exasperated look on her face, Lynn let out a huge sigh.

Oh, that bearded butler, huh? He's been dealing with Princess Leonor's selfishness for more than a decade now. That butler was a big reason why that wild princess was able to put out an image of being a proper lady in front of others.

With a butler like that in charge of her instruction, I suppose this isn't surprising.

I also underwent a bit of training when I had to accompany the Princess to a dinner party as her escort. Just thinking of how harsh that training was made me shudder.

"Lynn, you've sure been through a lot. It's my treat today, just focus on resting your body and soul."

I wiped my eyes and said those kind words.

"L-Lynn, what happened to you over there...? Don't tell me..."

"After being captured by evil aristocrats and held hostage... Well... Sorry for not realizing it sooner. You can take a break from questing for a while. We'll be able to manage on our own. Of course, we'll split the money with you evenly."

The other two followed my lead and treated Lynn with kindness.

"A-Aren't you letting your imaginations run wild? They didn't do anything to me! You said you'll treat me and all, but isn't that the money that I lent you!? Cut it out already, don't give me those pitying looks!"

Lynn tried her best to excuse herself, but we continued to treat her with kindness.

Short story 2: The Axis Cult

“I’m thinking of joining the Axis Cult.”

The pen rolled out of my hand and slipped onto the floor.

I thought it was a bad joke at first, but looking up at her face, she seemed deadly serious.

As I was writing down my dream request at the Succubus shop that I frequented, Loli Succubus said something completely outrageous.

“Are you feeling suicidal because you got caught and beaten up when you visited them to show a dream? Even if you want to die, that’s a horrible way to go. There are better ways to go out.”

“I’m not looking to die.”

“A succubus joining the Axis cult is nothing short of suicide. You’d have a better chance of survival stripping naked and diving into a horde of monsters.”

Both the Axis Cult and the Eris Church hate the undead and devils with a passion. If her true identity is revealed, she’ll definitely be exterminated.

Loli Succubus should be well aware of this fact. She’s seen them in person and is deathly afraid of them, after all.

“Dust-san, do you know what the opposite of love is?”

Suddenly, Loli Succubus said something incomprehensible again.

She’s completely out of it today. I know I should stay out of such a troublesome conversation with a woman in such a state, but I can’t help but be curious about what she said earlier.

I suppose I’ll go along with her for a while.

“That’d be hate, obviously.”

“Pfft, you don’t get it at all.

She proudly puffed out her chest and said, but what else could it be?

“Listen up, hating someone is the same thing as having great interest in someone. Your feelings are affected by them, after all.

Indifference is not feeling anything for the other person at all!

Haven’t you experienced something similar before, Dust-san? When you aggressively tried to hit on someone, first they’d get angry with you, before eventually ignoring-“

“Right, that’s enough!”

That brings to mind more incidents than I can count.

“In other words, the worst response you could receive is indifference, not hate.”

“When you put it that way, I can see what you mean... Still, what does that have to do with you joining the Axis Cult?”

I don’t see the link at all. The more I hear about this the more confused I get.

“This morning, I went to Vanir-sama’s store to give him my aid... But Vanir-sama ignored me. No matter what I did he wouldn’t give me a response, and just stood in a corner the whole time...”

“Couldn’t he just be in a bad mood?”

“That’s not it!”

She leaned over the table and pushed her teary face up towards mine.

It’s amazing how flat she looks even in this situation.

“Normally he would say something kind like ‘Urgh,how annoying. Moi is busy right now, so if you have that much free time, go sweep the floors instead.’”

“That’s kind?”

“Even harsh words like that are a sign of love!”

I now understand what they mean when they say that a maiden in love is blind.

“So I thought about it, if I was going to be ignored, I would much rather be hated. And thinking about what Vanir-sama hates most, that could only be the Axis Cult!”

It’s true that Sir hates the Axis Cult. The only thing he hates more is that Aqua girl. I don’t think I’ve ever seen the two of them have an amiable chat before.

“That’ll definitely make him hate you, but if things go badly you might end up getting vanquished, you know?”

“That would be preferable to spending the rest of my life without receiving attention from the man I love.”

“Eep... Scary...”

Looking at those bloodshot eyes, it doesn’t seem like she’s joking.

If I let things go on as is, I get the feeling that she might actually become a pretty fanatical Axis Cultist.

“Joining the Axis Cult seems like something of a last resort, so let’s try going back to Sir’s place to check one more time before we resort to that.”

“If he ignores me again I’m signing up immediately!”

I dragged Loli Succubus to the Magic Item shop.

Sir was definitely standing in the store, with his back to the window.

Just seeing his back doesn't tell me anything.

"He's stood in that same spot since this morning, ignoring me..."

"Well, let's head inside."

I opened the door and entered, and Loli succubus followed me like she was trying to hide behind me.

"Oh, Dust-san! Ah, Succubus-chan is with you too."

The (technically) owner of this store, Wiz, called out to us.

"Is Sir in a bad mood? He seems kinda silent."

Normally Sir would at least offer us a word, even if it's barely veiled complaints. I can kinda see why Loli Succubus would be so distraught.

Even now he's simply staring at the wall in silence.

"Ah, no, that's not Vanir-san, that's just a husk that Vanir-san has shed. He said something about leaving it here as a repellent against Aqua-sama before heading out to do some shopping."

I wordlessly stared at Loli Succubus, but she already had a wide smile on her face.

"Of course. There's no way Vanir-sama would ignore me like that!"

This girl's mood sure changes in a hurry!

But, oh well, that's fine. I much prefer her smiling without a care in the world than being depressed.