



HELL MODE

■ The Hardcore Gamer Dominates in
Another World with Garbage Balancing ■

STORY HAMUO

ART MO



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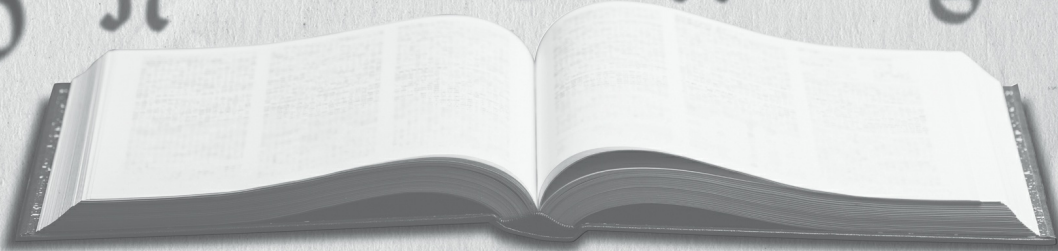
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Chapter 1: Heading To Rohzenheim

“We will go to Rohzenheim.”

Rohzenheim, the country of elves that was currently under attack by the Demon Lord Army, had issued a request for aid to Allen. When the headmaster had confirmed that the capital had already fallen and the nation was on the verge of being entirely overrun, Allen decided to accept the request.

“Guys, we *have* to go to Rohzenheim,” Allen repeated.

Sophie, who had just learned that the whereabouts of her mother, the queen of the elves, was currently unknown, blinked back tears of relief. “Lord Allen, thank you so much!”



“Hold on, Allen!” Cecil interrupted. “You’re just going to leave the Central Continent high and dry?”

Her concern was understandable: two million monsters were about to march on the northern fortresses of Giamut just as the elves who served as a crucial source of healing magic were being recalled from the front lines.

The headmaster offered a reply. “The Central Continent does have the Hero...”

“Just how long do you think the front line is?!” Cecil yelled back, letting her emotions get the best of her.

It was true that there was a significant distance between the western end of the Giamutan front line and the eastern end. More than fifty fortresses dotted the border, each built to withstand the Demon Lord Army’s invasion and able to station over a hundred thousand troops. It was precisely because there was a limit to the Hero’s abilities that Mihai, Cecil’s flesh-and-blood brother, had lost his life. It would not matter if the Hero managed to protect one fortress when the rest of them fell—it would still spell the end of both the Empire of Giamut and the Central Continent as a whole.

“But we... Rohzenheim doesn’t even have a Hero!” The headmaster could not help raising his own voice. Judging by his haggard face, perhaps he too was desperate to return to his home country.

Cecil turned to Allen. “Are we *really* going to Rohzenheim?” She peered into his eyes as if trying to glean his thoughts.

“In this situation, saving Rohzenheim is the only viable option.” *I do want more info first, though.*

“So you *will* go?! Thank you, Allen! I’ll immediately arrange for a high-speed magic ship that’ll depart tomorrow!” the headmaster promised, clearly aiming to make all the necessary arrangements before Allen changed his mind.

Oh right, there are high-speed magic ships made for traveling between different countries’ capitals and other continents.

There were two varieties of magic ships: normal and high-speed. Due to the

urgency of the situation, the headmaster intended on arranging the latter for them this time, even though it required exponentially more magic stones to run. Allen and his companions were currently in the Kingdom of Ratash, which was located south of the Empire of Giamut and somewhat near the heart of the Central Continent. Their magic ship would be a direct flight to the neighboring continent of Rohzenheim.

“By the way, headmaster, may I ask you more questions about the present state of the battle?”

“O-Of course. Ask me whatever you want.”

“You mentioned that Rohzenheim is being attacked by a force of three million and that there is another force of two million on standby ten days north of Giamut. What about Baukis?”

The Demon Lord Army was supposedly dispatching ten million troops, but only five million had been accounted for. Allen was therefore trying to figure out what was going on with the remaining five.

The headmaster nodded, then proceeded to share that there was indeed a force from the Demon Lord Army approaching Baukis. It had been at sea, standing by a slight distance off the continental shore, and fighting had not broken out yet.

The Demon Lord Army's Deployed Numbers

- Rohzenheim: 3 million
- Central Continent (Giamut & Allied nations): 2 million
- Baukis: 1 million
- Reserves: 4 million

Meruru, who was from Baukis and had been looking worried this whole time, murmured softly, “One million to Baukis...” Her father was a low-ranking military noncombatant who was aboard a naval vessel at that very moment.

“I see. So Baukis is getting double the usual annual numbers,” Allen mused

aloud. *And unlike the Central Continent and Rohzenheim, the battle with Baukis is on open water.*

Current Situation of the Empire of Baukis

- A force of 10,000 golems is preventing the Demon Lord Army from landing on the continent.
- The Demon Lord Army's intention is to overwhelm the golems with numbers. The engagement will take place at sea (with Meruru's father involved).
- Fighting using numbers exhausts the Demon Lord Army too, but the fact that they're attacking with twice their usual number indicates just how serious they are this year.
- Baukis also wants reinforcements.

After sharing everything he knew about Baukis's current situation, the headmaster turned to Meruru. "And Meruru..."

"Yes, sir?"

"Your country has ordered your return."

"But, sir!"

Apparently, Meruru had intended on heading to Rohzenheim with the rest of the No-life Gamers. However, the royal edict issued by Ratash had only listed Allen, Krena, Cecil, Dogora, and Keel by name. There was no mention of Sophie or Meruru, who came from Rohzenheim and Baukis respectively.

The headmaster had used the term "request" to avoid offending Allen, but there was no changing the fact that this was an express command from his king. Allen could not care less about the king, but he saw no particular reason to go out of his way to turn him down, and he did not want to undermine Cecil's family's identity as nobility either.

Not that saying no is an option when this is a literal royal decree.

Back when the current king had been the crown prince, Allen had caught his attention—in the negative sense. Only nobles were duty bound to fight on the battlefield, but the king had gone to the trouble of issuing a royal decree to ensure that Allen would also head for the now-crumbling Rohzenheim.

Does he seriously hate me that much?

In truth, it likely made no difference to the king if Allen died fighting. Given this, Allen decided he would absolutely come back safe and sound so that he could pay the king a visit and rub it in his face.

After an internal sigh, he turned to the headmaster. “Am I correct in assuming that the order to return is not only for Meruru, but for all dwarven students?”

“That is correct. Rohzenheim has ordered all elven students to return home as well.”

The elven and dwarven students on exchange in the other Central Continent Academies—each signatory nation of the Five Continent Alliance had been required to establish one—had also received the same order via their own headmasters. Considering the crisis that Rohzenheim was in, the elven students were most likely going to be dispatched to the front lines as soon as they got home.

Okay, now I understand the situation on each of the three fronts. “So then, what is the Demon Lord Army really aiming for?”

“Their...aim?” After a pause, the headmaster asked, “What do *you* think is their aim?”

C’mon, don’t tell me they don’t have one. Not after they’ve gone to the effort of gathering such numbers and timing everything so precisely.

The headmaster looked so mystified, Allen almost blurted out his thoughts in response. However, he managed to swallow the words back.

Thankfully, Cecil always caught on quickly when it came to talk of strategy. “I’m not sure, but do you think the Demon Lord Army’s assigned an order of priority to the three fronts?”

Allen nodded. “Their army is huge, but it’s still a finite number. I have no idea

how many troops they have in total, but they've now gathered ten million over the past five or so years since the appearance of the Hero. If the Army were to fail this time, it would mean they wasted just that much time and effort. So it only makes sense that they want to keep their losses minimal."

"In other words, they're being smart with their deployment."

"Exactly. Ten million might sound like a lot, but that's nowhere near enough to wipe out all three northern continents. I suspect that the Demon Lord Army knows this, and it also knows how difficult it is to make headway into the Central Continent when it's still fully supported by squads of elven healers."

Allen went over his analysis of the situation based on the facts as a way to remind everyone not to be blinded by sheer numbers. In terms of fighting strength, Talented soldiers were more powerful than Rank B monsters, which made up the overwhelming majority of the Demon Lord Army. There were around two million Talented soldiers in Rohzenheim. Of course, the average one-star soldier would be hard-pressed to fight Rank A monsters, but such beings made up only around one percent of the entire Army.

Cecil nodded with understanding. "I see. So you mean they'd need far more to wipe out the world."

Consequently, the Army had come up with a strategy focusing their attacks on Rohzenheim first. Doing so would prompt the elves to all return home—which was happening as intended—and effectively abandon the Central Continent. After destroying the elves, the Army could then take its time finishing off the Central Continent.

This would in turn lead to the collapse of the Five Continent Alliance. After all, though Rohzenheim was on the brink of annihilation, there was no changing the fact that it had decided to call its troops back without due process. Doing so was basically a declaration that it was withdrawing from the Alliance. Even if it managed to survive this crisis, its relations with the other nations of the world would still have been irreparably crippled. It might not ever receive aid again, even if it were to become embroiled in war once more.

Once the Five Continent Alliance collapsed, the Demon Lord Army would likely focus its efforts on Giamut, the Alliance leader that represented the

Central Continent. After losing its elven healers, this superpower would be a lot easier to destroy.

This saved Baukis, the country that had put up the stiffest resistance to date, for last. Although it had sent quite a few golems to the Central Continent to support the war effort there, the large majority of Baukis's golems were still in position to defend their home continent. But after taking out Rohzenheim and Giamut, the Demon Lord Army would be able to consolidate all its forces and simply overwhelm this one last bastion through sheer numbers.

Allen had lost Krena and the others quite a while earlier into his explanation—the sole exception was Cecil, who had been attending war tactics and strategies classes with him. “And the four million in reserve will be sent to the three fronts as needed?”

“I think so,” Allen nodded. “If the current forces attacking Rohzenheim and the Central Continent prove enough, I suspect they will send all four million to Baukis to bolster the one million that's already there.”

“And if those reserves were to aid the Central Continent front, Giamut would be fighting a total of six million?”

“If it comes to that, then yes.”

The reserves would most likely be dispatched in order of priority. If Allen and his friends simply twiddled their thumbs while the Demon Lord Army obliterated Rohzenheim, then those very same forces would set their sights on the Central Continent next.

This was why Allen decided to go to Rohzenheim. Saving Rohzenheim could very well be the key to saving the Central Continent—and by extension, the known world.

Keel, who had remained silent this whole time, finally spoke up. “But still, how is Giamut supposed to face two million monsters without any healers?”

He was not against going to Rohzenheim, but it was not lost on him that if nothing was done, an enormous number of soldiers at the Giamutan front would soon be losing their lives. Even if the No-life Gamers brought Rohzenheim back from the brink, there was a chance they would return home

only to find Giamut already in ruin.

“About that...I have an idea.” Allen grinned.

Dogora recognized the look on his face. “We can’t help out the Central Continent in person, but you think there’s something else we can do for them?”

“Exactly. It’s far from a foolproof plan, but I’m planning on sending recovery items to the Central Continent front.” Allen took out a Frond of Life made from a Rank E Summon and showed it to everyone.

Comprehension dawned on Cecil’s face. “Ah, so that’s going to heal them in place of the elves.”

“I see. Recovery items.” The headmaster examined the leaf closely when it reached his hands. “The front line already has recovery items, though.”

“Sir, that single leaf you’re holding is capable of healing enough soldiers to fill one of the school’s training fields by 1,000 HP.”

“A thousand?! And over such a large area?!”

There was a reason the headmaster was so surprised. The higher level a Cleric was, the wider an area they could heal all at once. However, even a Cleric with Healing Magic Lvl. 6 could only heal a crowd the size of a twenty-five-meter-long swimming pool. And yet, Allen had just claimed that a single Frond of Life could heal multiple times that area. Of course, as Healing Magic was dependent on the Intelligence stat, a max-level Cleric would be able to heal much more than 1,000 HP.

“I have 600,000 of these, sir,” Allen added. “If these were all sent to the Giamutan front, I imagine they’d help the troops continue fighting for quite a while.”

“You have six hu— Do you mean it, Allen?!”

Over the past year and a half, Allen had actually made 650,000 Fronds of Life. There was a point in time when he was sourcing more magic stones than he could use to create the Fronds, but that only lasted until he obtained Quick Summoning. Of the 650,000 that he had created since then, he was now offering to send 600,000 to the Central Continent to stand in for the

withdrawing elven squads.

“Yes, sir,” Allen confirmed, nodding. “I will transfer them over later.”

“Understood. I’ll make arrangements for a large open area.”

“Thank you, sir. In order to use them effectively... May I use the map? So, there are more than fifty fortresses along the front line. However, I predict that only ten of them will need the extra healing—well, subtracting the one where the Hero’ll be stationed, nine places. And all nine can be reached in eight days via magic ship.”

If the Demon Lord Army was at least ten days away, it would be possible to deliver all these Fronds of Life to the appropriate fortresses before the fighting broke out.

Allen then continued his explanation. He hypothesized that the push by the Demon Lord Army this time included all the forces they had accumulated over the past few years. The reason he had been so sure about the number ten was because if the Army was actually serious about taking down the Giamutan capital, then the route of their advance was mostly decided for them and that it would involve only ten fortresses at the most.

The Hero was capable of using wide-area Healing Magic and had an MP Recovery Ring, so the fortress he would be stationed at would not need recovery items. As a rough approximation based on the effective range of the Fronds, the fortresses would probably use around ten thousand per day.

He now understood what Allen was getting at, but the headmaster still had a frown on his face. “Those numbers mean your items would only last two months at the most.”

“That is the case,” Allen agreed. “And that’s why we have to turn things around in Rohzenheim within two months.”

Rohzenheim was on the brink, Giamut’s fate was up in the air, and Baukis had its hands full. Even after sending so many recovery items to Giamut, Allen knew that he would still need to resolve things quickly in Rohzenheim. If the Demon Lord Army’s top priority really was Rohzenheim and the situation changed on that front, then it would inevitably affect the Central Continent.

Of course, we're fighting against opponents who can do their own thinking and scheming. For all we know, the Central Continent could be their top priority and it's just been sheer luck they've been making such smooth progress in Rohzenheim. And of course, everything could change based on how Giamut acts. I don't expect it to just sit back and wait for its demise.

Real battles involved real people. And it was impossible to perfectly predict how others would behave.

"Has Giamut declared a state of emergency yet?" Allen asked the headmaster.

"Indeed. The emperor of Giamut declared it some time ago."

Rulers such as kings and emperors had the power to declare a state of emergency. Once they did, the duty to fight that had previously applied only to nobles would apply to commoners and serfs as well. This carried the risk of fostering explosive resentment among the masses, possibly even leading to a revolt; it was invoked only when the nation was truly in danger—just as Giamut currently was. In other words, it was an ace up a country's sleeve.

The Empire of Giamut was currently gathering all its reserves, retired and volunteer soldiers, and conscripts in an effort to bolster its forces. Those who did not need further training, such as the reserves and retirees, would be stationed within a month.

So the entirety of Giamut already knows it's in a state of emergency. As expected of a world with magic tools for instantaneous communication. Hmm, so the front lines will be reinforced within the next month.

"Still, to make six hundred thousand of such miraculous items... Is this due to your power as a Summoner?" The headmaster asked Allen. If true, it meant a single Summoner had the power to single-handedly overturn the outcome of a battle.

"No, sir, these were not made by my power."

"Huh?! The heck're you saying, Allen?!" Dogora shouted.

Although he had not been capable of understanding the majority of what had been said just now, Dogora as well as the rest of the No-life Gamers knew

without a doubt that Allen had made these Fronds of Life. Even while dungeon delving, they had seen him take out a plant pot during breaks to continue making more of them. Currently all of the Gamers—Dogora included, of course—were carrying quite a few inside the storage magic tool they each kept on their person.

“This is an elven elixir created by the elves of Rohzenheim,” Allen said, enunciating carefully. “They managed to find a way to mass-produce them, although doing so has greatly lowered their efficacy.”

“Elven elixirs? These?”

Back when Allen fought Helmios, Helmios had seen Allen use a Blessing of Earth and had mistaken it for an elven elixir. Allen was now taking advantage of the leeway he had from the fact that no one else was familiar with a Summoner’s abilities.

If the Hero’s reaction had been sincere, then the real elven elixir can probably heal lost limbs for real too.

However, as a member of the elven royal family, Theodojiil knew what the real elven elixir looked like. He was about to question Allen’s claim when Sophie suddenly spoke up. “Lord Allen speaks true,” she confirmed. “This is undoubtedly an elven elixir.”

“Your Highness, what—”

With perfect timing, Sophie added, “In exchange for calling all its people back, Rohzenheim is now sending these elven elixirs to take their place. Isn’t that right, Lord Allen?” She looked at him with upturned eyes as if she were a student waiting for a teacher to check her answer.

“That’s exactly it, Sophie. Rohzenheim did not forget its role as a member of the Five Continent Alliance.”

The Demon Lord Army was hoping that the withdrawal of elven forces would lead to the collapse of the Five Continent Alliance. Once this international cooperative body was gone, each country would be that much easier to invade. However, the introduction of these so-called elven elixirs would give Giamut a very different impression.

With the Demon Lord still at large, I figure it'd be best to keep the Alliance intact for now. The way Allen saw it, once the Demon Lord was gone, this organization would become one where a handful of superpowers lorded it over countless other less powerful countries. At the moment, however, it was still necessary.

“How brilliant, Lord Allen!” Sophie gushed. “Rohzenheim is saved, Giamut is saved, and even the Alliance is saved!”

“Of course, the plan I described is a countermeasure based only on what I’ve heard so far,” Allen cautioned. “The situation could still change at the drop of a hat.”

Things would likely go the Alliance’s way at first. After all, the Demon Lord Army would be attacking with the assumption that the Central Continent now had no healing support without the elven healers, but they would instead face Giamutan forces with six hundred thousand Fronds of Life on hand. The Demon Lord Army would catch on sooner or later and adjust their tactics accordingly. Similarly, if Allen and his friends managed to help Rohzenheim make a comeback, the Central Continent front might also end up affected somehow. It would be foolish to expect everything to go well.

And that’s why we need insurance.

As Allen mulled over what else he could do, the headmaster now fully understood what Allen and Sophie were getting at. “Thank you. These recovery items will be an enormous help.”

“Think nothing of it. All I ask is that these are called ‘elven elixirs’ going forward.” Allen then turned to Meruru, who had been looking down ever since she had heard she was to return home. “Meruru, we’re still coming to Baukis in April. We made a promise, and I intend to keep it.”

“Huh?”

“We’ll deal with the Demon Lord Army as fast as we can, then hit the Rank S dungeon in Baukis together!”

“O-Okay.”

“Since you’ll probably also be dispatched to the front lines—here, take some

more elven elixirs.”

The dwarven girl possessed the Talos General Talent, which enabled her to pilot golems up to mithril grade. This made her a one-in-ten-million prodigy. At the same time, that very Talent made it very likely she would be deployed to battle as a soldier. Therefore, Allen handed her some more Fronds in addition to the number she usually received as a member of the Gamers. He made a point of calling them “elven elixirs” as he did so.

Oh right, I should give her MP recovery items too. I’m sure the war situation would change with a thousand Seeds of Magic.

What the soldiers fighting on the Central Continent needed most was HP recovery items. In contrast, Baukis was protected by golems that ran on MP from their pilots and therefore needed items to recover MP instead.

“Thank...you...”

When Allen handed her a pouch bulging with Seeds of Magic, she thanked him once more as tears streamed down her face. She felt greatly indebted as, on top of not having been able to contribute in any significant way to their dungeon dives so far, she was now temporarily leaving the party.

Keel spoke up again. “I need to explain things to Nina.”

“That’s a good point.” Allen nodded. “We should bid a proper farewell to those at the base.”

The No-life Gamers decided to return home and first say goodbye to Nina—Keel’s younger sister—and the servants who had basically become family before they headed out to the battlefield.

* * *

A day passed, most of it spent bustling around preparing for the journey to Rohzenheim. The headmaster had promised to arrange foodstuffs and additional necessities, but there were other things that Allen needed to prepare.

It was possible that, after spending almost two whole years in this city, the party might not ever come back to it again. The thought seemed quite poignant

somehow. There were no absolutes in war, and no guarantee that they would win. The large majority of residents in this city had not the faintest idea about the Demon Lord and were simply living their lives as usual. And Allen wanted to do what he could to keep it that way.

Keel explained the situation to Nina and his servants. Nina looked quite shocked, but managed to smile and say, “Please come back safe and sound!” with tears in her eyes. As a result of his departure, Nina and the servants would be entering Count Hamilton’s care a year early.

Allen intended to end things in Rohzenheim as quickly as he could, but he had no way to ensure everything would go the way he wanted. Consequently, as soon as he had left the headmaster’s office the day before, he had gone and explained everything to Rifol, his classmate of two years and Count Hamilton’s son. Rifol had replied, “You know how close we are. There’s no problem at all,” then promptly headed off to make the necessary arrangements.

Allen understood this to mean he had incurred a favor with Rifol. He made a mental note to repay it after the war was over.

* * *

Allen made his way to the outskirts of Academy City and opened his grimoire to do a thorough check of the stats, Abilities, and Awakened Abilities of the Rank B Summons that had become available to him upon obtaining Summoning Lvl. 7.

Status of Insect B (Ant)
Type: Insect
Rank: B
Name: Antsy
HP: 2,600
MP: 1,000
Attack: 2,400
Endurance: 3,000
Agility: 3,000
Intelligence: 2,000

Luck: 1,800
Buffs: Endurance 100, Agility 100
Ability: Formic Acid
Awakened Ability: Spawn

Status of Beast B (Cerberus)

Type: Beast
Rank: B
Name: Cerby
HP: 3,000
MP: 1,000
Attack: 3,000
Endurance: 2,700
Agility: 2,800
Intelligence: 2,000
Luck: 1,400
Buffs: HP 100, Attack 100
Ability: Triple Bite
Awakened Ability: Ninefold Crunch

Status of Bird B (Griffin)

Type: Bird
Rank: B
Name: Griff
HP: 2,000
MP: 1,000
Attack: 2,000
Endurance: 2,300
Agility: 3,000
Intelligence: 3,000
Luck: 2,400
Buffs: Agility 100, Intelligence 100
Ability: Fly
Awakened Ability: Jet

Status of Grass B (Peach)

Type: Grass

Rank: B

Name: Peachy

HP: 100

MP: 3,000

Attack: 100

Endurance: 100

Agility: 100

Intelligence: 100

Luck: 3,000

Bufs: MP 100, Luck 100

Ability: Blessing of Earth

Awakened Ability: Blessing of Heaven

Status of Stone B (Mithril Armor)

Type: Stone

Rank: B

Name: Mirror

HP: 3,000

MP: 1,000

Attack: 2,800

Endurance: 3,000

Agility: 2,300

Intelligence: 2,000

Luck: 2,500

Bufs: HP 100, Endurance 100

Ability: Reflect

Awakened Ability: Total Reflect

Status of Fish B (Archelon)

Type: Fish

Rank: B

Name: Genbu
HP: 2,900
MP: 3,000
Attack: 2,000
Endurance: 2,900
Agility: 1,000
Intelligence: 3,000
Luck: 2,600
Buffs: MP 100, Intelligence 100
Ability: Turtle Shield
Awakened Ability: Turtle Barrier

Status of Spirit B (Blonde Girl)

Type: Spirit
Rank: B
Name: Ellie
HP: 2,600
MP: 3,000
Attack: 2,600
Endurance: 3,000
Agility: 2,600
Intelligence: 3,000
Luck: 1,800
Buffs: Endurance 100, Intelligence 100, High Physical
Damage Resistance
Ability: Gravity
Awakened Ability: Black Hole

Status of Dragon B (Winged Dragon)

Type: Dragon
Rank: B
Name: Dora
HP: 2,800
MP: 1,000
Attack: 3,000

Endurance: 2,900

Agility: 3,000

Intelligence: 1,800

Luck: 1,600

Bufs: Attack 100, Agility 100, High Breath Damage
Resistance

Ability: Fire Breath

Awakened Ability: Hellfire of Fury

A blonde teenage girl beside Allen asked, “So, you would like us to eviscerate these monsters that call themselves the Demon Lord Army?” This was Spirit B. Her body was translucent and she was floating in midair. Her tone was respectful, but what she was saying sounded rather disturbing.

“That’s right. Go only for the monsters. They’ll be fighting a lot of human soldiers, and you’re all expressly forbidden from attacking the humans, even if they attack you first.”

“Your will is our command, Master.”

Allen had no idea how much his Summons could do against two million monsters, but in a battle, every little bit helped. This was why Allen was now silently bringing out a whole slew of Summons that he planned on dispatching to the Giamutan front. Thanks to Sharing, he would be able to see the situation there for himself once they arrived.

If Giamut were to fall, the next country that the Demon Lord Army would target on the Central Continent was very likely to be Ratash, Allen’s homeland. Keeping an eye on the state of the war in the north would allow him to immediately react to any changes in the situation. This time, he had been caught unawares by news of Rohzenheim and needed a whole day to get things in order; he wanted very much to avoid having to go through this again.

Allen’s Summons were able to stay Summoned for a month at most. So far, he had only ever used them for tasks that could be accomplished within a month,

such as farming dungeons, serving as a method of communication with Granvelle City, and helping out with Rodin Village's development. This time, however, his Summons needed to traverse the entire longitudinal breadth of the massive Empire of Giamut. As such, he was restricted to sending Summons that could fly through the sky—and quickly, at that.

Summons Being Sent to the Giamutan Front

- Bird E x 2
- Bird D x 2
- Spirit B x 5
- Dragon B x 5

This seems about right if I want the group to be capable of scouting, fighting, and information gathering. And I'll have them carry some recovery items too.

Allen gave his Summons one more order. "Oh, and if you encounter a demon or Demonic Deity, try to send back as much information as possible."

I did try to look into them, but couldn't find anything at all. I want to at least know how powerful they are.

Representing the rest of the Summons, Dora replied, "Gotcha, Master. We'll do what it takes to gather all the info we can."

According to the headmaster and Allen's homeroom teacher, the Demon Lord Army had an internal hierarchy and a chief commander, but they did not sound too sure. Allen wanted to confirm these facts for himself.

"All right, I'm counting on you all. I might send reinforcements depending on the situation on the front line, but don't count on it."

"We will eviscerate every last one of them, Master."

"Hell yeah. We'll burn 'em to embers!"

After Spirit B and Dragon B—the only two kinds who could speak the human language—gave Allen their replies, the whole group flew off together, heading

northward while constantly Sharing their vision with him.

* * *

“Thanks for waiting,” Allen said as he rejoined his friends in front of the high-speed magic ship. The vessel measured a hundred meters from bow to stern.

Krena waved at him cheerfully. “You’re done, Allen?”

“Yep. I just sent them off.”

Hundreds of elven students stood huddled in small groups around the No-life Gamers, clearly shaken by the sudden order to return. Sophie was going around to each one and reassuring them, saying, “There’s no need to worry. Lord Allen is with us,” as if it was supposed to mean something.

Keel, who had just finished saying his final farewells to his family, appeared to be arguing about something with the oldest servant. As it turned out, he was trying to hand over the entirety of the hefty sum he had earned from dungeon delving, but the servant was adamantly refusing to accept it. They had done this same thing the night before. Eventually, it was the servant who folded, promising to only use it for Nina’s sake.

Allen approached Dogora. “You sure about this?”

Although the king of Ratash had issued a royal decree, Allen still made a point to confirm how Dogora felt about the situation. If Dogora did not want to go, Allen was confident he could make the decree go away—especially since Dogora was a commoner.

“Huh? Sure about what?”

The way Allen saw it, Dogora was the one who would be in the greatest danger in the coming battles. After all, his class was one that fought in close quarters, and he would be up against Rank A monsters—possibly even Rank S ones. This was significantly different from Cecil and Keel who, despite having relatively low HP and Endurance, could stand in the back behind Allen’s Summons. Krena was also in the vanguard, but her stats were a good deal higher than Dogora’s.

I’m not sure I’ll be able to properly protect everyone if we suddenly encounter

a Rank S enemy.

Currently, Dogora's weapon and all his armor were adamantite. This was enough to protect him against most things, but the enemies they would be meeting could very well be even more powerful than the dragon boss in the Rank A dungeons in Academy City that they already had such trouble fighting.

The worst-case scenario flashed through Allen's mind, prompting him to ask, "You know you don't *have* to stick with me, right?"

Dogora grinned. "The hell you sayin'? The royal decree had my name on it, didn't it? We're gonna raise hell on that battlefield and wrangle up all the rewards we're worth," he said, copying Allen's tone.

"You're damn right we are. Do your best up front with Krena, then." *Though we still don't know exactly how we'll be joining the fight.*

"You got it, boss." Dogora propped his greatax on his shoulder, gripping it tightly.

All right, first stop: Nest.

The high-speed magic ship that they would be riding was scheduled to arrive in Nest, a massive port city at the southernmost tip of the Rohzenheim continent, in four days.

"Ah, looks like they've started boarding. Guys, let's go."

And so the magic ship took off, carrying the No-life Gamers to the battlefield.

Chapter 2: Gathering Information from Ratash Palace

A solitary bird was perched on a branch, peering inside one of the windows of the resplendent Ratash Palace. Suddenly, the door on the far side of the room opened, and a noble, a knight, and a butler entered. When the knight noticed the bird, he opened the window, allowing the bird to slip inside.

“Pardon the intrusion, Viscount Granvelle,” the creature said as it bowed toward the noble. This was of course Allen’s Bird G Summon.

“Apologies you had to wait so long. The audience with the king lasted some time.”

“I understand. What have you learned?”

The very day Allen had received word from the headmaster, he reached out to the viscount via the Summon permanently stationed at the Granvelle mansion. When the viscount had heard about Allen and his group’s sudden dispatch to the front lines, he had immediately headed to the royal capital to demand an explanation from the king. However, the most he was told was that “His Majesty is currently occupied,” all the way up to the end of the day. The next morning, he had changed his approach, saying that Allen and his group had already boarded a high-speed magic ship and that he was there to seek a thorough explanation for their deployment. He was immediately granted an audience.

“I shall start with the situation on the front lines,” the viscount said. “Supposedly, the Demon Lord Army began marching on Rohzenheim a month ago.”

Allen had previously asked the viscount to dig up as much information as he could regarding this war. While waiting for his audience with the king, the viscount had done his own investigation, reaching out to high-ranking officers in the army and other nobles. Since the House Granvelle Affair, he had developed

cooperative relationships with various government factions. Many nobles were more than happy to help the viscount out.

In so many words, the northernmost fortress of Rohzenheim had already fallen to a force of three million monsters. The elves were particularly proficient at providing support and healing. Their weapon of choice was the bow, making them perfectly suited for fighting defensively behind castle walls. It was unthinkable for them to lose a fortress in such a short time.

However, the Demon Lord Army had apparently achieved the impossible. The northernmost fortress of Rohzenheim, said to be a massive bulwark that stood impregnable for decades on end, was taken down in a matter of days. It was clear just how serious the Demon Lord Army was about decimating the country.

The Demon Lord Army had attacked the Central Continent, Baukis, and Rohzenheim concurrently. However, Baukis had its golems, and Rohzenheim had the protection of the Sovereign of Spirits, so the demons had concentrated their efforts on the Central Continent up until this year. After decades of assaults, it had finally managed to establish a solid foothold on the Central Continent, something that it had yet to achieve on Rohzenheim's or Baukis's continents.

When the Hero appeared, everything had changed. The weakest amongst the three was no longer the Central Continent, but Rohzenheim. Despite having the protection of the Sovereign of Spirits, Rohzenheim had far fewer soldiers compared to the other two continents. In exchange for having long life spans, elves had greater difficulty having children. To make matters worse, they had a strong aversion to allowing those of other races within their borders. This exclusionary mindset, along with all their other weaknesses, suddenly came to a head when they found themselves the easiest target amongst the three major forces.

Rohzenheim had then issued an urgent request for reinforcements through the Five Continent Alliance, but by then, the Demon Lord Army was already knocking on the doors of the capital city, Fortenia. Ratash attempted to send its reply, but it did not go through, indicating that Fortenia had already fallen. So another message—"Allen and his companions have been ordered by royal decree to answer your summons"—was sent instead to Nest, a major city in the

south of Rohzenheim.

“Rohzenheim is currently in a very precarious situation. The fighting has reached the southern part of the country, and multiple cities are doing what they can to slow the advance of the Demon Lord Army,” the viscount continued.

It had taken the Army some time to completely bring down the capital—enough for all the residents to evacuate. Now, practically the entire surviving elven population was packed into several major settlements in the south. Ratash did not know just how far the Demon Lord Army had reached, but chances were that those southern cities were embroiled in combat at this very moment.

“Thank you for finding all this out, sir.”

“It was no effort. Now, as for His Majesty...”

The viscount changed the topic to his audience with the king of Ratash just now. He repeated the king’s exact words: “This is a grave crisis where an entire country’s fate hangs in the balance. As a fellow signatory of the Five Continent Alliance, we have a duty to help where we can. And while our nation highly values Allen’s fighting strength, we still think accepting Rohzenheim’s request and sending him to their aid is the right thing to do.”

Furthermore, Allen’s entire party—including Cecil Granvelle, the daughter of Viscount Granvelle—was ordered to accompany him to ensure that he could exercise his abilities to their fullest extent. The viscount plied the king with numerous questions during the audience, but the king refused to acknowledge any of them.

I see, so he’s sticking to the line of moral superiority, but his true intention is probably to feed my entire group to that army of three million.

“I’m sorry, sir. This might be due to the bad impression I left His Majesty with after the tournament.”

The memory of the ceremony held after the martial arts tournament at the Academy came to Allen’s mind. As a result of that incident, Cecil was now caught up in what was clearly the king’s reprisal.

After a pause, the viscount managed to say, “It is fine. However, Allen...please help ensure that Cecil comes back home safe and sound.”

“I swear it, sir,” Allen replied with confidence.

* * *

The No-life Gamers gathered in a room inside the magic ship they were aboard. Allen briefed them all on what the viscount had told him. After Allen finished, Dogora still looked quite bewildered. In contrast, Sophie had grown despondent ever since she had heard that Fortenia had fallen.

“So...what does that mean?” Dogora asked.

“The elves are still fighting hard,” Allen answered. “They haven’t given up yet, so we can’t give up either.”

Sophie looked up, light returning to her eyes. “Lord Allen...”

“However, I admit that what happened this time is my fault. I didn’t expect the king to be so blatant with his retaliation.”

Although the king did say he planned to send Keel and Krena to “the part of the front lines with the most fighting” during that dinner. Looks like he’s switched his target to me instead.

Dogora frowned. “Huh? Why’re you apologizing? You did that for our sake, right?”

“Dogora’s right,” Cecil agreed. “And everything’s gone well so far. Just do what you think is best, and we’ll follow you.”

“I have a feeling you’re my fastest ticket to restoring my House,” Keel grinned, implying that he had no problem either.

Representing the others, Cecil said, “You get it now, Allen? We’re all fully committed.”

Ever since she had lost her brother, Mihai, to the war, Cecil had resolved to dedicate herself to the cause. All this meant was that the war she was supposed to join next spring had come a little early.

I’ve heard that Rank S monsters show up on the front lines, so I had wanted to

first gear everyone up in orichalcum equipment before we got there. I guess there's no point worrying about that now.

Everyone seemed ready to join the fray, and naturally, Allen was as well. His sole regret was that he still had no clue how to remove his party members' level caps. He was not holding out much hope, seeing how even Hero Helmios and Sword Lord Dverg had failed to do so. This was why he had wanted to at least procure full sets of orichalcum weapons and armor for his companions, but it was a moot point now. They would have to make do with what they had.

"By the way, what do you plan on doing when we reach Nest?" Cecil asked Allen so as to take stock of the situation. The party had spent the past three days on the magic ship, during which they had discussed things such as battle formations. However, they had yet to hear about the big picture that Allen was envisioning.

"Nest is located at the southernmost tip of Rohzenheim. We're simply going to fight our way northward and do a clean sweep of the Demon Lord Army."

He had every intention of ridding the continent of every last invading monster. So much for being sorry for causing everyone trouble. His companions gawked at him with astonishment and disbelief.

Unable to hold back, Cecil exclaimed, "Isn't that aiming a bit too high?!"

"You... You intend on wiping out all *three million* of them, Lord Allen?" Sophie asked in a fluster, peering into his eyes for confirmation.

Allen shook his head. "Not three million. If possible, I want to take care of the four million reserves too, so that's seven million total." He predicted that depending on how the war developed, the reserves—likely on standby north of the Central Continent at the moment—would also be mobilized.

After struggling a while to get her words out, Sophie asked in a trembling voice, "Is... Is that even possible?"

"Well, we're currently heading over in response to a summons—I have no idea exactly how we'll be taking part in the war. Sophie, do you think you can do something about that?"

At the moment, the No-life Gamers had yet to be told what their orders

would be when their boots hit the ground. All they knew was that they had been sent for. Would they be assigned to a squad? Serve as a commando unit? Or was it something else? From the information he had on hand, Allen had been able to come up with a few strategies, but everything was based on the assumption that they would have the freedom to act freely.

“There’s no need for worry, Lord Allen.”

“You sure?”

“You will be free to fight however you wish. I swear it on my name as princess. Right, Volmaar?”

“O-Of course, Princess Sophialohne.”

Sophie knew full well that the way Allen fought was unconventional and there would be no point shoehorning him into the elven army. She now burned with a sense of purpose in ensuring that Allen got all the freedom he needed. She felt assured that this was the reason she had been born the crown princess of the elves.

The magic ship would be landing in Nest the next day. Allen and his friends mulled over the coming fight in their own way as time and the ship marched on.

* * *

At long last, the Rohzenheim shoreline came into view the following evening.

“We’re finally here,” Cecil murmured.

“Right on schedule,” Allen replied.

Whew, Nest isn’t burning. That’s a relief.

The No-life Gamers would soon be landing in Nest, a city located at the southernmost tip of Rohzenheim. If this city had been ablaze, it would have meant the entire continent had already fallen to the Demon Lord Army.

Sophie stayed glued to the magic ship window, her expression anxious. According to the intel from the king of Ratash, no one yet knew whether her mother was safe or not.

Before long, the magic ship touched down on the city’s landing pad. There,

Allen and his companions disembarked alongside hundreds of elven passengers.

Rohzenheim's landmass was around a third the size of the Central Continent, but its population was equal to the relatively tiny kingdom of Ratash at only twenty million, even though Ratash had a mere fraction of the land that Rohzenheim did.

Whoa, that's a lot of luggage.

The landing pad was flooded with wooden boxes packed with people's possessions. It felt as though all the belongings of the entire elven race had been gathered in this one place. A closer look revealed that many crates were partially burned and charred, likely having been carried quite literally through the flames of war. People hurried to and fro sorting through everything while those who looked like elven military officers barked out orders.

The elven students peered around anxiously before many took off running, spurred on by their worry for their families. They were searching for their parents, but this proved to be a frustrating challenge with how chaotic the situation was.

Without warning, a carriage approached the Gamers. When it came to halt before them, an elf got out and bowed reverently toward the group.

"We are beyond relieved to have you back with us safe and sound, Your Highness. The Elder Council wishes to meet with you. Please allow me to accompany you there."

Sophie's eyebrows twitched once in response to the word "Elder," but she quickly prompted the party to join her in the carriage. "Let us go, Lord Allen, everyone."

As the carriage clattered on, Allen stared out the window. "What will become of the elven students we arrived with?"

"They will be taken care of," Sophie replied. "They were notified ahead of time where to gather."

Soon, the carriage left the landing pad site. What they saw outside made all the No-life Gamers gasp in shock.

“This is just... It’s *horrible*.” Cecil was at a loss for words.

Countless elves were desperately healing other elves covered in blood. The shrill screams and wails of children pierced the air. The scene was exactly that of a field hospital.

Just how far does this extend? The wounded and refugees are spilling out the city walls. The number of refugees... There’s more than a million here.

When the magic ship had landed, Allen immediately sent out two Bird Es to scout the area from the air. Once he had a thorough grasp of the city’s layout, he planned on sending them north to scout out the way to the front line.

Nest was a sprawling commercial metropolis encircling a large bay. Through Hawk Eye, Allen observed that its streets were completely filled with the wounded and displaced. Many were receiving treatment out in the open—there was likely no more room inside the buildings. Many had lost limbs. The elves seemed to have given up completely on their most severely wounded, either because they did not have the resources or the MP to tend to them. The fact that the elves, who were exemplary healers, had so many wounded spoke volumes about how fierce the fighting on the front lines was.

As his companions stared in shock at the graphic scenes passing by their carriage, Allen checked his stock of recovery items and continued scouting ahead.

“Allen, we have to help them!” Krena cried out, unable to bear it any longer.

However, Allen shook his head. “We don’t have the time right now. And I only have a limited number of recovery items.”

Indeed, they could not simply turn a blind eye to this situation, but they would be putting the cart before the horse if they wasted time here and let the whole country fall in the end. They had yet to know just how many wounded there were or how many recovery items would be needed to heal them all. If they dedicated attention to this problem, it might delay everything else, and by then it would be too late. This was why Allen insisted on forging ahead.

“But I can’t just leave them be!” Krena insisted, her face red. She clearly had no intention of backing down.

Keel stepped between the two. “How about this, then?” He suggested that Krena, Dogora, and Keel go around helping as many people as they could with the recovery items they had and Keel’s Healing Magic. The No-life Gamers all kept a few inside their personal item pouch for when they went dungeon delving. “And while we do that, you go and finish having that talk with the Elders, boss.”

“All right, that works for me.” Allen took off the MP Recovery Ring he received from Helmios and handed it to Keel. “Once our next step is decided, I’ll come pick you guys up.”

“Then we ain’t got time to just dillydally here! C’mon, let’s go!” As soon as the discussion was over, Dogora immediately leaped from the moving carriage.

“Go!” Krena grabbed hold of a flustered Keel and immediately followed suit.

“Wai— *Krena?!* ” Keel screamed.



“Well, I’m sure the three of them will be fine,” Cecil said.

“That’s true.” Allen nodded.

In a matter of moments, they could spot the light of Keel’s magic through the back window of the carriage. Even if it meant the group going two separate ways, Allen wanted to respect the wishes of his companions.

After proceeding for a while more, the carriage came to a stop before a large wooden structure in the center of the city. Allen and the rest of his group disembarked, and a buzz of voices sprang up all around as the elves recognized Sophie. Many even put their hands together and started praying. This scene vividly illustrated just how much of a presence she, as their crown princess, had in the hearts of her people.

Sophie had been stricken at what she saw in town, but she now gathered herself. “Come, Lord Allen. This way.” Sharing Allen’s sense of urgency, she turned to her attendant. “Volmaar, look for the Elders.”

“Yes, Your Highness. Right away.”

A short while later, Volmaar returned. He guided the group inside the building, and they eventually arrived at a pair of doors that opened to a large conference room. It was occupied by twelve elderly elves as well as those who appeared to be the generals and other high-ranking officers of the elven army. One of them was missing an arm—everything about him indicated that he had just recently returned from the battlefield. Everyone was huddled around a map spread over a massive round table in the center of the room, locked in heated discussion.

Sophie strode into the room with the remaining No-life Gamers following behind.

“Thank Rohzen you are back, Princess Sophialohne!” One of the Elders threw his arms up with joy.

Without responding, Sophie looked around the room, then asked in a steely voice, “Where is Her Majesty?”

“I’m sorry?”

“Where. Is. She?”

“I-I’m truly sorry, Your Highness. We all insisted that she evacuate with us, but...”

“So she is still on the front lines, then?”

“Y-Yes, she is, Your Highness.”

Hearing this, Sophie flew into a rage. “And all of you turned tail and fled while leaving your queen to *die?!?*”

The Elders quivered under the full brunt of her wrath.

Sophie’s angry that the Elders evacuated on their own and abandoned the queen?

While Rohzenheim was ruled by a queen, it was these twelve Elders who managed the day-to-day management of the country, with the queen holding the authority to veto any decisions they made. The queen was currently absent, but every last one of the twelve Elders was present, meaning not one of them had stayed with her. Their desertion was what had infuriated Sophie.

One of them tried to assuage her anger. “W-We are truly sorry, Your Highness.”

“So then, what is Her Majesty’s current situation?!”

“Her Majesty is still fighting in Tiamo at the moment.”

Ah, we learned about that place in geography class. It’s a pretty big city, if I remember right. Is that where the front line is now?

Allen recalled that Tiamo was a city farther inland in the southern region of Rohzenheim. If the battlefield had already reached Tiamo, it meant seventy percent of the country had fallen to the Demon Lord Army.

“She is still safe and well, then?”

The Elders shifted uncomfortably at Sophie’s question. No one had a ready answer.

“What is the matter? Answer my question.”

“I’m afraid...Tiamo can only hold out for just a few more days.”

Sophie wordlessly turned from the old men with pained expressions to the armored generals. The one with a missing arm was hanging his head.

Are they all still in armor so they can be ready to head to battle again at a moment's notice? Hmm, so the situation's bad enough that even their generals are getting hurt and being forced to retreat back here. Sophie did promise that I'll be able to do whatever I want, so I guess it's about time for me to step in.

Allen abruptly spoke up. "So, this is my understanding of the situation: This city is full of refugees fleeing the war and wounded soldiers. Right now, the front line is at Tiamo, which is about to fall in a matter of days. The queen is also at Tiamo and at risk for her life. Is that all correct?"

Everyone looked at Allen in surprise. The one-armed general asked, "Your Highness, is this perhaps...?"

Sophie had regained her composure during the lull when Allen was talking. She nodded. "Indeed. This is the savior that the Sovereign of Spirits prophesied about. He has come to save Rohzenheim."

"My name is Allen. Nice to meet you all."

"*This* young man is the promised one?" The one-armed general studied Allen from head to toe. He did not think the boy looked all that strong.

All right, now that I have the information I need, it's time to get our priorities in order and take action.

"Oh, so you are our savior!" another elven general said, scooting over to make room around the table. "Come, come. We are in the middle of a strategy meeting at the moment. Please, join us."

Allen thought continuing this meeting was a waste of time, though. There were other things that he needed to sort out first. He gave Sophie a look as if to ask her to back him up, to which she nodded in response.

"The military meeting is certainly important, but first, allow me to heal your arm, General," Allen said.

"Ah, I am grateful for the offer, but rather than my arm, our forces—"

"Lukdraal, do as he says. Approach," Sophie commanded.

“Y-Yes, Your Highness.”

The elf’s arm had already been treated with Healing Magic to stop the bleeding, but the bandages wrapped around the wound were still being stained red. It was a horrific sight.

Allen took out from his Storage what looked like a red peach. His companions did not question why he seemed to be going back on his earlier statement about not being able to afford the time to heal the wounded. They knew full well after their days at the Academy that he always had a reason for whatever he did.

This peach-like item was called Blessing of Heaven and was the product of Grass B’s Awakened Skill. It served to heal all friendly individuals within a hundred meters to one hundred percent of their health. The three Gamers who had gotten off along the way there also possessed ten of them each.

When Allen used the Blessing of Heaven, the bandage wrapped around the general’s stump ripped apart as a new arm sprouted in its place. At the same time, the other wounded elves in the meeting room were healed to full.

“Th-This can’t be!” Lukdraal rubbed his new arm many times over, but could not even find a scar. One of the old men was so astonished his hips gave out and he fell from his chair.

“Is... Is this an elven elixir?” the general asked in shock.

“Yes it is,” Allen replied.

There were ranks to recovery items, and elven elixirs were among the very best. Supposedly made from fruit of the colossal World Tree beside Fortenia through a secret elven technique, they were highly treasured even in Rohzenheim. There were very few items powerful enough to restore lost limbs—not even a Flower of Muellerze, the plant worth a steep five gold that had saved Allen’s father’s life, could regenerate missing body parts. An elven elixir was what had immediately come to the general’s mind upon seeing his arm grow back.

In the same vein, it was said that only a Saintess and other Cleric-line classes with at least three stars had spells to regrow lost limbs. This feat was naturally

beyond Keel, a one-star Cleric, even though he had already maxed out both his level and class skills.

“By the way, how many wounded soldiers have been transported to this city?” Allen asked.

“Around 100,000. Even more, if you include the wounded refugees.”

“General, we can fully heal every last one of those 100,000 troops.”

“You can *what?! Th-That’s impossible! Only those who have been incapacitated and deemed unfit for duty have been brought to Nest!*”

Allen produced another Blessing of Heaven as if he was performing a magic trick. “Just one of these can heal enough people to completely fill the plaza we passed on our way here. And I have three thousand of them.”

The plaza in question was already filled with the injured at the moment. In fact, it was the exact place where Krena and the others had leaped off the carriage and started healing whomever they could.

There’s no need to hand over all three thousand right away. I suppose a thousand would do. I have to find a way to restock soon.

Nest was a sizable port city, and judging from what he could see through Bird E, several hundred Blessings of Heaven would be needed to completely heal everyone here. Allen currently had twelve thousand Rank B magic stones on hand, ready to be converted into Summons. Separate from that number were the three thousand Blessings of Heaven that he had accumulated over almost two years of school.

“Th-Three thousand?! But that’s—”

There was no way such a miraculous item existed in such numbers. Before Lukdraal could finish his sentence, Sophie cut him off.

“Lukdraal, accept what Lord Allen says as true.”

“U-Understood, Your Highness.”

Allen continued: “I have companions who’re already healing those in the plaza, but that is a task far beyond just three people. By now there should be a number of troops who’ve been restored to full health and can move around, so

please order them to gather the wounded.”

Lukdraal, who had just experienced for himself the efficacy of a Blessing of Heaven, nodded in response. “Understood. I’ll send men out immediately. Now, the military meeting...”

What’s my top priority right now? To help reestablish the front line and turn back the Demon Lord Army’s advance.

“I appreciate the importance of this meeting, but I shall be participating through a Summon that will represent me. I myself will be immediately heading for Tiamo with my companions.”

“Come again?”

“I am truly sorry. However, if Tiamo is only able to hold out a few more days, then it is paramount that I leave immediately so as to secure Her Majesty the queen and protect her.”

“The thought certainly pleases us, but...even our most powerful horses would need a month to pull a carriage all the way to Tiamo. The magic ship might reach in time, but it would be too conspicuous and would undoubtedly get shot down.”

Lukdraal added ruefully that Tiamo was already a lost cause. The city had been completely encircled by enemy forces, making it impossible for anyone to even get close.

So, we still do have magic ships on hand, but the Demon Lord Army is capable of shooting them down out of the sky. This sort of information is exactly what I need to know.

“Ellie, you caught all that, right? Stay here and let me know what else you learn.”

“Your will is my command, Master.”

“What?! Where did she— Who is this?!”

The generals and Elders all jumped in surprise at Spirit B’s sudden appearance. Not wishing to waste even a second, Allen ignored their reactions and turned to give Ellie her orders. As he would be constantly Sharing with this

Ellie, she could always act as his mouthpiece and relay what he wanted to say.

Oh right, and to make it easier to exchange information, I should leave a Poppo here too.

Bird F's Awakened Ability, Messenger, made it possible for Allen to instantaneously speak and show footage to specified targets within a hundred kilometers. He was sure that this Awakened Ability was going to play a huge role in the ongoing war.

Sophie ordered the elves to cooperate with the Summons, then Allen passed over a thousand Blessings of Heaven to them. It would be up to the elves themselves to figure out which areas had the largest number of wounded.

"All right, guys—off to Tiamo we go," Allen said.

"Don't forget to pick Krena and the others up first," Cecil reminded him.

The No-life Gamers left the building to find the sun already set. A whole crowd of elves had gathered around the building, having heard the news of their princess's return. A ripple of murmurs ran through them when Sophie appeared. The magic tool lampposts dimly illuminated shifting faces and varying reactions in the crowd: some burst into tears, some pleaded for help, some shouted out their gratitude, and some begged her to run away and save herself.

"We're heading over on your Summons, right, Allen?" Cecil asked for confirmation's sake.

"Yep," Allen nodded. "Come on out, Griffs!"

Seven massive, elephant-sized creatures with the limbs of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle suddenly appeared with an earsplitting screech. When they reared up on their two hind legs and spread their wings, their gargantuan forms reached the same height as the building behind them.

Under Allen's command, the Griffs knelt down, making it easy for the No-life Gamers to mount their necks. Before the crowd of onlookers and soldiers had time to fully comprehend what had just happened, Sophie gave Lukdraal one last order.

"Lukdraal, take care of Nest. We will definitely save Her Majesty and the

residents of Tiamo. In the meantime, focus on healing the troops here and preparing them for return to the front line.”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

The Bird Bs took off in the direction of the plaza, seen off by soldiers assuming the elven salute.

“So Lord Rohzen’s prophecy *was* real,” Lukdraal murmured as Allen’s group disappeared into the distance. He then turned around sharply and began barking orders at his subordinates.

* * *

We’ll make it in time. I’ll make sure that we do!

Allen deftly manipulated his griffin to land in the plaza. Krena immediately ran over.

“Krena, our next destination’s been decided. We’re going to Tiamo!”

“B-But...” she turned around, looking at all the wounded elves who still lay in view.

“You don’t need to worry about them. I’ve given the elves enough recovery items to heal everyone in this city. They’ll be passing them out among themselves soon.”

“Really?! So everybody’ll be saved after all. Thank you, Allen!”

Even though Allen had only just arrived, Krena, Dogora, and Keel quickly got up to speed on their new objective. Without further ado, they each hopped onto a griffin.

“Okay, hold on tight! Griffs, use Jet!”

“Wait, wait, we’re using that again?!” Keel wailed.

The group had often used this Awakened Ability in the dungeons, so they were more than familiar with it. And Keel was not a huge fan, to put it mildly. However, the Bird Bs paid Keel no mind.

“KIEEEEEEEEE!”

At Allen’s order, they shot off into the sky, accelerating to a breakneck speed

in no time at all. This quickly left the Bird Ds that Allen relied on to see in the dark behind, prompting him to use Quick Summoning to constantly Summon new ones ahead to update his view of the surrounding area with Night Vision.

Several hours later, Tiamo came into view, surrounded by countless glowing dots. The buildings closest to the city's walls, as well as quite a few farther in, were also giving off billows of smoke. The city was ablaze.

Chapter 3: Tiamo

As the No-life Gamers approached Tiamo, Krena was the first to cry out, “The city’s on fire!”

They were soon close enough to identify the tens of thousands of glowing dots encircling the city as torches and campfires. Thick clouds of smoke poured out from within the city walls.

“Horo, use White Night!”

“Hoot!”

Bird D’s Awakened Ability, White Night, enabled Allen to instantly register everything within view inside a hundred-kilometer radius at night.

Phew! Okay, the city hasn’t fallen yet!

Although he could not see inside buildings, he now had an accurate idea of the state of the city and the besieging forces. There was no sign of battle at the moment, likely because it was nighttime. The Demon Lord Army was camped outside, while the elves behind the walls scurried about putting out fires and carrying their wounded.

“The city’s still standing!” Allen shouted to his companions, prompting a look of relief to spread across Sophie’s face. “We’re gonna climb super high and then land directly inside the city!”

There were members of the Demon Lord Army that could fly too. It might have been the dead of night, but to minimize their chances of being discovered, Allen ordered the Bird Bs to first fly up to a higher altitude, reach the area directly above Tiamo, then fly straight down, aiming for the largest building in the center of the city. The enemy should not have had any intel on Allen’s group yet, but it was always better to be safe than sorry.

“All right, we’re going down now!”

“Huh? Wait, I need to prepare myse—”

Before Cecil could finish her thought, the Bird Bs plunged downward.

* * *

The large building in the center of Tiamo was filled with elven soldiers. When the Bird Bs landed in front of it, a commotion sprang up among them.

“Wha—?! We’re under attack! We’re under attack! Monsters have made it inside!”

Soldiers flooded out the entrance, quickly grabbing the bows from their backs and nocking them with arrows. Spirit Users held their hands up, pointing them toward the Summons. Just as their palms started glowing faintly, Volmaar shouted from the back of his mount.

“Stop it, you fools! Hold your fire! Know that you are directing your attacks at Her Highness Princess Sophialohne!”

Ah, I thought it would go better than this. My bad, my bad. But I’m sure Volmaar understands, with the situation being what it is. We don’t have time to do this nice and slow. Do your best, Volmaar.

As the soldiers glared at the Bird Bs with hostility, Allen mentally cheered Volmaar on. Despite having been taken by surprise at Allen’s decision to land so abruptly—and to do so right before the noses of those guarding the heart of the city—the elf was doing a good job controlling the situation.

“P-Princess Sophialohne?”

Thanks to Volmaar’s roar, one by one, the soldiers began noticing Sophie’s characteristic silver hair and golden eyes as she gracefully dismounted her griffin.

“I have returned. Sorry for the fright, everyone. Please lower your weapons.”

“We are sincerely sorry!” the soldiers shouted in unison, falling to their knees like a tidal wave.

“It is no matter,” Sophie replied, using a gentle tone to reassure the troops.

One of the soldiers, whose outfit indicated a high rank, said, “Please allow me to guide you inside, Your Highness!”

After Allen dismissed all the Bird Bs, the whole group followed their guide into the large building. As they approached the second floor, they started picking up on voices raised in dispute. Before long, they were shown to a large room where just over a dozen elves were standing in a circle.

“You of all people need to evacuate the most, Your Majesty!”

“This city will fall tomorrow!”

“I must not. Many of my subjects still remain in this city, trapped within the walls before they had opportunity to escape. Tomorrow, I, too, will fight in person. If you’re worried for my safety, then do everything you can to ensure that we survive the day.”

“Many of our soldiers have already died or been severely wounded. We are nearing our limits. I beg you, please evacuate. You are what makes Rohzenheim!”

“No, our people are what makes Rohzenheim.”

As the woman assumed to be the queen argued with the elves all around her, the soldier who led Allen’s group saluted and loudly announced, “Reporting! Princess Sophialohne and Sir Volmaar have arrived!”

Uh, is he not gonna announce us too? But still, “Sir” Volmaar, huh? He is her closest attendant; I guess the position comes with a pretty high standing.

Volmaar, who always accompanied Sophie as her guard, was generally a reticent man and never talked about himself.

“What? How dare you make a ruckus in this situa— Wait, what? Princess Sophialohne?!”

One of the elves started to upbraid the soldier in irritation, but then noticed Sophie’s presence. The entire room fell silent.

Hmm, so that’s the queen of the elves. She looks exactly like Sophie. Uh, is that a flying squirrel on her shoulder?

There was a throne at the far end of the room, but judging by the conversation just now, the woman who was apparently the queen had been participating in the conference as another military commander. She had the

appearance of someone in their late twenties and sported silver hair and golden eyes. Allen had half expected her to be in a white dress, but instead, she was decked out in armor and was as heavily armed as every other soldier in the room.

Sitting upon her shoulder was a flying squirrel. Although Allen understood that the elves loved nature, he was surprised to see just how close they were with animals. However, the creature looked entirely out of place in the tense atmosphere. When the squirrel noticed Allen, it began staring at him fixedly, so the boy gave the animal the stink eye in return.

“Sophie...welcome back.”

“I am glad to see you, Your Majesty.”

A soft “oh no” escaped the lips of one of the elves as he realized that now both the queen and crown princess were trapped in this city fated to fall the very next day.

“Were you listening just now, Sophie? Tiamo is going to be destroyed tomorrow. The best we can do is hold out for one more day. I’m sorry to say this when you’ve only just arrived, but you should r—”

The queen was just about to say “run away” when she started. How did Sophie get here? This city was surrounded on all four sides by the Demon Lord Army. The generals had just been trying to convince her to evacuate, but that in itself was an impossible feat given the situation.

“Your Majesty, I’ve brought Lord Allen with me. We no longer have to worry about this war.”

Sophie’s words prompted the queen to look at the black-haired boy, as did everyone else in the room. One of the generals exclaimed, “So this is the savior promised by Lord Rohzen!”

Allen stepped forward, lowering his head respectfully. “My name is Allen. Your Majesty, Queen of Rohzenheim, I have come in response to your urgent summons.”

“W-Well done. Thank you for making the journey,” another general said. At the same time, he and the others shot Allen’s group a look, the thought, *What*

can a mere seven people do? clearly flashing across their faces. However, they quickly smoothed their expressions and welcomed everyone.

It had been the same with Lukdraal, the general who the group had met in Nest. It would be the same even if Allen were Helmios, the Hero from the Central Continent said to be peerless on the battlefield—all these officers understood that in a war, the strength of a single man made little difference. A general had to always remain realistic; one who only saw what he wanted to see would be neglecting his duties.

Looks like they don't all blindly believe the Sovereign of Spirits' sleep talk. Now that their country is on the brink of collapse, I'm sure they've all got things they need to do instead of twiddling their thumbs and praying to some god or spirit.

The reaction of the room told Allen everything he needed to know about how the people of Rohzenheim viewed him.

“We’ve also heard of your fight with the Hero,” the queen added. “We greatly appreciate someone of your abilities fighting with us.”

As it turned out, Allen being dispatched to Rohzenheim was not due entirely to the prophecy from the Sovereign of Spirits. Word of Allen’s duel with Helmios at the Ratashian Academy several months prior had already reached this country.

“It would be my honor,” Allen replied.

“As for the current situation—”

Another military meeting? Though to be fair, this city is in danger of being overrun tomorrow, so I guess that's important too. However, that's even more reason to not waste what little time is left.

Just as one of the generals was about to catch Allen up to speed, he interrupted the man. “I’m sorry. Before that, I have a question: how many wounded soldiers are there here? And how many who can still fight?”

Just as in Nest, Allen thought it a waste of time participating in a discussion that did not take his abilities into consideration. The general did not look particularly offended at having been cut off so rudely. He thought about it a while.

“I believe we have around 140,000 wounded and 60,000 who can still fight.”

And from what I just saw through White Night, the Demon Lord Army has around 300,000.

Allen suspected that at the start, fewer than 100,000 had been stationed in Tiamo. However, as the war went on, soldiers wounded while fighting farther north had probably been brought here.

There are around ten magic ships docked in Nest, which means they do still have significant transporting capabilities.

Through the Spirit B staying in Nest, Allen had learned that the magic ships in Nest had been used extensively to transport wounded soldiers and refugees. However, now that Tiamo was entirely surrounded by enemy forces, there was no longer any way for those magic ships to land here.

“Thank you for the answer. In that case, please use this to get everyone back to full health as quickly as possible.” Allen took out a Blessing of Heaven from Storage and showed it off.

“Wh-What is this?”

“This is an elven elixir. This single item can fully heal enough people to fit the area of this building four times over. And when I say heal, I mean it can even regrow lost limbs.”

Even though he was talking to the queen of the elves, Allen still insisted on calling the Blessings of Heaven “elven elixirs.”

An incredulous chorus of “What?!” rang out.

“I will be leaving a thousand of these elven elixirs here,” Allen continued. “Please pass them out and prepare everyone for tomorrow’s battle.”

“But that’s... That’s impossible!” The generals could not hide their surprise. Did they think the effect was impossible? Or was it the quantity? Perhaps it was both.

Sophie gazed straight into the eyes of her mother and the generals, speaking clearly. “Everything that Lord Allen said is the truth. The 100,000 wounded soldiers in Nest should all be fully healed by tomorrow as well.”

Someone inhaled sharply, though it was not clear who.

After a pregnant pause, one of the generals asked hesitantly, “D-Does this mean we can still fight?”

“So it seems,” the queen answered, looking at Allen with gratitude. “How can we repay you?”

“Please leave that discussion for after things are over,” Allen replied. “For now, we should be focusing solely on getting through this crisis and turning things around.”

Heh heh heh, I never said I won't ask for anything!

“However, one problem remains. If we suddenly show such large-scale movement, the forces surrounding the city might make a move.”

“There is no need to worry about that, as my companions and I will be heading out now to launch a night attack. We'll buy you the time you need.”

“A night attack?!”

Allen flashed his usual wicked grin. “They seem to be fast asleep in their camps.”

Krena looked surprised. “You mean we're gonna fight now?”

“That's right.” Allen nodded. “However, Cecil and I will be moving separately. The rest of you, match our timing.”

“Okay!” Krena smiled.

The rest of the No-life Gamers nodded in acknowledgment, even though they had no idea what Allen actually had in mind. During their time with him in the dungeons, he often described ways of fighting and strategies that went completely over their heads at first. Once they followed his instructions, however, they would always reflect back on it afterward and see the logic behind what he was getting at.

“Does that mean all seven of you will be stepping foot outside the walls now?” the queen asked apprehensively.

“Not all seven,” Sophie cut in. “Volmaar, you stay here to help direct the

distribution of the elven elixirs and to convey the information we learn from the battlefield.”

“Understood, Your Highness.”

Right, it's a good idea to leave someone who fully understands the effects of the Blessings of Heaven in charge. Good call, Sophie. I should leave Ellie here too.

As the military meeting here would likely resume right after he headed out, Allen decided to have a Spirit B stand in for him here, just as he did in Nest.

“Ellie, let me know what you learn here.”

“Your will is my command, Master.”

“A SPIRIT?!” the elves cried, with some nearly falling over in shock.

“No, this is my Summon.”

The surprised elves mumbled variations of “I see” but continued staring intently at Ellie.

Wow, the elves here reacted to Ellie exactly the same way as those in Nest did. Does she really look so similar to their spirits? I'd be interested in seeing a Spirit User in action.

The Spirit User class involved directly forging a contract with a spirit and borrowing the power of said spirit to fight. Allen had learned at the Academy that this was a Talent that only elves could be born with, just like only dwarves could possess Talents for piloting golems.

“Speaking of which, I spotted some large eyeball-bat things flying in the air that looked like they were monitoring the city. They aren't spirits, are they?” When he had used White Night just now, Allen had spotted six such creatures.

They didn't seem friendly at all. We can shoot them down, right?

“Those are the Demon Lord Army's scouts.”

The elves had already shot down many of these large bats, but they had been replaced in no time. As a result, the Demon Lord Army knew almost everything that was going on inside the city.

“In that case, we’ll get rid of those pesky scouts first. Once we do, please take that as the signal to begin the plan.”

The idea was for everyone to burst into action at the same time. As the bats were supposedly going to be replaced, it would be difficult to keep everything entirely under wraps. Even so, Allen’s group intended on doing everything they could to prevent the Demon Lord Army from gaining any intel.

Just as the No-life Gamers were about to head out, the queen said, “Sophie, I’m counting on you.”

The princess bowed reverently. “I will not let you down, Your Majesty.”

Even though her flesh-and-blood daughter was heading out to take on an army of 300,000, the queen made no move to stop her. Perhaps she had simply accepted this as the destiny of a member of royalty.

Allen deposited a thousand Blessings of Heaven in the room, then left the building with his companions.

“All right, let’s start with the enemy scouts. Horo, Ellie, come out.”

“Hoot!”

“So we’re squishing the enemy’s eyes!”

As the cooldown for White Night was a full day, Allen was now using a fresh Bird D Summon. After confirming the exact locations of the bats in the sky, he then instructed the Spirit B at his side to get rid of them all. The Spirit B inside with the queen immediately reported about the bats’ disposal, surprising everyone in attendance with how swiftly Allen had taken care of the issue. By this time, he had already moved on to the next step of his plan.

“Okay, we’re heading to the north gate. That’s where the largest group of monsters is.”

The range of White Night’s effects had included the area outside the walls too. Allen already had a full grasp of where the Demon Lord Army forces were located as well as their numbers.

Tiamo was a squarish city around five kilometers on each side. It was protected by stalwart walls that towered ten meters high with a gate at each

cardinal direction. Currently, the Demon Lord Army had 30,000 troops camped one kilometer away from each of the four gates for a total of 120,000 troops. To prevent the elves from escaping southward, the direction not yet under the Army's control, another 50,000 were spread out to the left and right of the southern camp. The remaining 130,000 were all clustered together to the north in what was very likely the main camp.

This main camp was Allen's target, as there were simply more monsters to kill; concentrating there would deal the most damage to the enemy's command structure. So, he called out the Bird Bs and soared back up into the sky with his party. This night was so dark that they could travel without drawing any attention so long as they maintained an altitude of one kilometer. Without further delay, they headed for the city's north gate.

Once beyond the wall, the group made a detour around the closer group of 30,000. Upon flying for three more kilometers, the main camp came into view. They found it sprawled over a surprisingly large area. As the Demon Lord Army was composed of monsters Rank B and above, they were all significantly larger than humans. Many of them were even taller than five meters.

There's supposed to be three million attacking Rohzenheim, right? If there's 300,000 attacking Tiamo, where're the rest of them? Hmm, this is something I need to look into.

The No-life Gamers landed about a kilometer east of the main camp.

"Are we gonna charge straight in from here?"

"That's right, Krena. The monsters in this corner are the easiest to fight against."

"Okay!"

The type that they were going to engage would not be able to follow them if they were to take to the air, making it easy for them to retreat should the need arise. Just in case, Allen instructed his companions to ride tandem if anyone's Bird B got done in. The Bird Bs were as big as elephants, meaning they could comfortably carry three people on their backs.

"Doras and Cerbys, come out," Allen called, Summoning thirty Dragon Bs and

ten Beast Bs. “Doras, focus on covering as large an area as possible with your Fire Breath. Cerby, prioritize defeating the odd Rank A when one shows up.”

“You got it, Master! Leave the riffraff to us!”

“Yes, Master! I’ll go for the head!”

The newest type of Summon that had appeared when Allen obtained Summoning Lvl. 7 was Dragon. Dragon B specialized in dealing long-distance AoE damage, but even its Awakened Ability was insufficient for killing the Demon Lord Army’s Rank A monsters in one strike. This was where Beast B came in. Beast B was specialized for dealing close-distance, single-target focus damage, and its Awakened Ability was even more suited for this role.

With Quick Summoning, Allen swiftly buffed everyone with the Fish-type Summons’ Abilities and Awakened Abilities. At the same time, Sophie and Keel did the same with all the spells at their disposal. From up in the sky, Bird D confirmed that the Demon Lord Army had not reacted at all to the faint glows of light caused by all the buffing. It continued keeping a careful eye out for even the slightest of movements.

“Okay, we should be good now. Cecil, you’ll be riding with me and attacking from above.”

“All right.”

“Everyone else, when you see our attack land, that’s your signal to get started too. Dogora, don’t charge too far in and get surrounded.”

“Huh? Like hell I will! Trust me, I got this.”

“Doras, Cerbys—rampage to your hearts’ content.”

“You bet we will!”

“Yes, Master!”

After giving a few more instructions, Allen headed up into the sky with Cecil riding behind him on his Bird B. Up and up they went, until they were a kilometer above the enemy camp.

They haven’t noticed us yet. If they had a proper lookout, they should have. I guess they just never expected to get attacked from above, since the elves have

no way of doing so.

Allen confirmed that the Army's troops were fast asleep down below. During his time serving House Granvelle, Allen had learned through fighting goblins and orcs that, with the exception of a few undead types, the monsters of this world needed food and sleep just like any other living being. This was why the Demon Lord Army was not attacking during the night. Fighting for a full month straight had probably taken a certain toll on them too.

I don't see any elves they captured. Did they eat them all?

Despite having brought down dozens of elven settlements so far, there were no hostages in sight.

Welp, this is something you guys started. Now you get to atone for it with your lives.

"All right, Cecil, they're all yours. No rush."

"Okay. Give me a moment."

Using one's greatest attack for the opening move against an unsuspecting enemy was just common sense. Allen's Stone Es had served this role thus far, but no longer. The girl currently with him had entirely outstripped him in this department.

Cecil closed her eyes to concentrate. Right away, a heat haze sprang up around her body.

Nice, she pulled it off.

As Allen watched, Cecil thrust both hands up into the air. Her eyes abruptly flew open.

"Petit Meteoor!!!"

A giant boulder burning red-hot suddenly came streaking down from the sky. After Krena, Cecil had been the next to succeed in learning how to activate her Extra Skill. The name of her Extra Skill was "Petit Meteor," a misnomer given the size of it. In the blink of an eye, the "petit" meteoroid enveloped in flames that measured dozens of meters across crashed directly into the Army's main camp, blasting both monsters and earth sky-high.

The roar of impact, loud enough to be heard all the way back in Tiamo, signaled the start of the night attack.

The monsters directly underneath the meteorite had been pulverized, and there was now a huge crater. Many monsters that had not been crushed were still blown to pieces or burnt to mere ashes before they even knew what had hit them. The scene of pure carnage looked like something straight out of hell. Some of the larger creatures' screams and roars even reached Allen one kilometer up in the sky.

So this is the power of a perfected Extra Skill. I hope Krena gets to this point someday. It's probably gonna take a while for my grimoire's log to catch up, but I think that took out about 10,000 of them.

Although it was indeed Krena who had been the first among Allen's companions to activate her Extra Skill, Cecil was the first capable of doing so in a perfected state. Since it was an AoE attack and the enemies had been quite clustered together, the damage it caused was nothing short of devastating. Allen's log was flying by faster than his eyes could keep up with.

"Phew, there we go." Cecil pursed her lips. "It's too bad Extra Skills can only be used once per day."

There was a certain randomness to Extra Skills. Even those sharing the same class were not guaranteed the same Extra Skill; there was often a variety. In Cecil's case, Petit Meteor required all of her MP, so she could only use it when she had full MP. It was a very wizard-like skill indeed.

The cooldown for the overwhelming majority of Extra Skills was one full day. It was rumored that there was equipment that could shorten cooldown time as well as expendable items that allowed users to immediately use their Extra Skill again, but Allen had yet to corroborate any of those rumors.

After nearly two full years of dungeon delving, Cecil had saved up around five thousand gold. She had used almost all that money to bid on a ring that gave her +1,000 Intelligence and another one that gave +1,000 MP, practically staking her entire fortune on increasing the damage of her Extra Skill.

"Thanks, good job," Allen said. "And I see Krena and the rest getting started."

With Cecil's attack serving as the starting signal, Krena and Dogora, with Keel and Sophie a slight distance behind, had begun charging into the Demon Lord Army on their Bird Bs together with all the Doras and Cerbys. As the Dragon Bs wiped out the Rank B monsters with their breath attacks, Krena and Dogora cooperated with the Beast Bs to clean up the leftovers.

"They're doing well," Allen commented. "Looks like it was the right call choosing the part of the camp with all the beast-type monsters."

"Mm, looks like it," Cecil agreed.

The Demon Lord Army was composed of a large variety of monsters: undead types, such as zombies and skeletons that could wield weapons; beast types, such as large bears and wolves; giants, such as ogres and trolls; and dragon types, such as basilisks and wyverns. They were grouped according to their types, and the No-life Gamers were currently attacking the beast types, which were all in the west.

The goal of Krena's group was to kill as many of the Demon Lord Army's forces as possible. It would be hard to finish off the undead, and the giants had high HP and often possessed regenerative powers, but beast types were relatively easier to kill in spite of their higher Attack. Numbers were very important in a war, so it was a good idea to start with those easiest to kill as a way to quickly bring enemy numbers down. In addition, these monsters could not fly, making it easy for Krena and the others to break off the engagement.

Allen and Cecil, however, had a separate objective.

"Allen, they've started."

"Mm, I see them over there. Here's a Blessing of Heaven for your MP."

"Thank you."

The fires caused by Cecil's Petit Meteor had alerted the rest of the main camp that they were under attack. Torches and campfires blinked into existence in overwhelming numbers. At the same time, a different kind of light could be seen: that of Healing Magic being cast. Those who could use Healing Magic were using AoE spells to heal their comrades, giving off glows that even Cecil could see with her naked eyes.

They sure are spamming those spells. Now, who're the casters?

Through Bird D's Night Vision, Allen spotted a robed skeleton with a staff that looked like a necromancer casting Healing Magic left and right. Not too far away were several other monsters doing the same.

Bird F's Awakened Ability, Messenger, enabled Allen to convey what he himself was seeing—as well as what he was seeing while Sharing with a Summon—directly to someone else's mind as information. He used this now to let Cecil know where to attack.

"You take care of that skeleton with the staff. I'll handle this side."

"Understood. Keep me updated."

"Will do."

After the short exchange, both of them shifted into action.

Eat this and die!

Ten Stone Es appeared in midair and immediately entered free fall, aiming straight for one of the glowing spots below. Apparently the necromancer did not have very high HP, as it died instantly when the Stone Es used Explode.

Allen and Cecil's goal was to wipe out the enemy's healers. They were prioritizing, in addition to the healers, enemy commanders and those with special abilities that enabled them to deal significant damage from a long distance. This, too, was common sense in a war. Thanks to Cecil's Petit Meteor, it was now very easy to identify whom they needed to target first.

"I think I'm starting to get the hang of this," Allen murmured.

"Me too!" Cecil replied confidently, using Earth Magic to create massive boulders and letting them fall without mercy.

I should try to conserve my Rank E magic stones as much as possible. That said, not to toot my own horn here, but I really am getting better at this. It feels great knowing that I'm improving.

Now that he was getting used to the task, Allen lowered the number of Stone Es he sent to each necromancer to around one or two so he could target more of them at the same time.

Ah, the Doras are down by three. Gotta keep sending replacements.

The more Summons that disappeared, the greater the burden on Krena and Dogora, who were fighting at close quarters. As such, Allen was trying to keep abreast of the situation and sending Strengthened reinforcements as needed.

As Allen continued backing up the front lines and attacking the enemy's healers, the Demon Lord Army finally launched its counterattack.

"Something's flying our way!" Cecil shouted in warning as dozens of winged stone statues closed in.

"Ah, gargoyles," Allen replied as he ordered the two Bird Bs to climb higher. "Griffs, go up."

"KIEEEE!"

Hah, they're so slow. They're nowhere close to catching up to Griff. Take this!

The incoming assailants were promptly blasted out of the sky with Stone Es.

"Okay, if there are any more monsters that make it all the way up here, I'll take care of them immediately. As long as we remain higher than them, we'll have the overwhelming advantage."

"I know, right?"

As always, Allen looked like he was having a ton of fun killing monsters. After this, undead types and other fliers came after him and Cecil, but the pair shot them down as soon as they appeared, all while continuing to rain death on the targets on the ground.

"Oh?"

"What happened?"

"The 30,000 outside the north gate are coming this way."

Aww, so soon. We were just about done wiping out all the healers and were about to pick up the pace killing the rest.

The main camp had already lost troops in the tens of thousands, making it impossible for the nearby force to continue standing idly by. The 30,000 that had been camped in front of the north gate were now heading for where

Krena's group was fighting, aiming to catch them in a pincer maneuver.

Allen used Messenger to convey what he had seen through Night Vision to his companions, then instructed them to regroup with him while the Dragon Bs and Beast Bs helped buy some time. In the blink of an eye, the No-life Gamers were reunited once again.

"Allen, I killed *sooo* many of them!" Krena cried, covered from head to toe in red monster blood.

"I saw." Allen nodded appreciatively. "Good job!"

"We got a lot too," Cecil said with a grin.

"I saw it! Your Extra Skill is awesome, Cecil!" Krena gushed about what an awe-inspiring sight it had been from the ground.

"I know, right?" Cecil replied. Still grinning from Krena's compliment, she turned to Allen. "We've dealt the Demon Lord Army a pretty big blow, right?"

Allen nodded. "Yes we did. But looks like it's not enough."

"Not enough?" Keel asked back. "As in, we haven't killed enough yet?"

Allen shared what his Spirit B was conveying about the situation within Tiamo. It had been two hours since they had launched their night attack and the elves were mobilizing every last person, but they were still far from healing all their forces.

"At their current pace, it's going to take them until daybreak."

Just as it had been in Nest, half a day was nowhere near enough. Even after everyone was healed, yet more time was still needed to form their ranks back up.

I gotta get a feel for how long these things take.

Cecil looked at him quizzically. "What should we do, then?"

Feeling his companions' querying gazes, Allen stopped deliberating and made a judgment call. "Let's attack the 50,000 in the south too. You guys can keep going, right?" he asked with the nonchalance of asking online friends if they could still stick around for another raid.

Dogora, also drenched with monster blood, was the first to answer. “Sure, I’m down. No problem.”

Everyone else nodded to indicate their agreement, then the whole group got back onto their Bird Bs and flew south.

In this way, the No-life Gamers continued racking up their kill count, all while vigilantly monitoring the Demon Lord Army’s movements.

Chapter 4: Rohzen, the Sovereign of Spirits

The No-life Gamers continued their assault through the entire night, killing a total of 40,000 monsters north and south of Tiamo. Thanks to taking out the enemy scouts first, they arrived in the south to find the monsters more or less oblivious about what had happened in the north, allowing them to use the element of surprise a second time. As a result of their efforts, the command structure of the Demon Lord Army was thrown into complete disarray and was in no state to attack Tiamo. Consequently, Tiamo earned a day of breathing space.

This did not mean Allen now got to sit around doing nothing, though. All throughout the fighting, Allen had been listening in on the military meetings happening in both Nest and Tiamo via the Spirit Bs he had left behind in each location. This was how he learned two pieces of critical information.

First, the Demon Lord Army had established their main base of operations in Fortenia, which they had already taken over. Although they had pushed the front this far south, burning and destroying the fortress and settlements along the way, the bulk of their forces was still stationed in the elven capital and was being dispatched in a steady stream of smaller units.

Second, Tiamo was not the only city currently fighting. At the moment, the battlefield involved three other cities along the same latitude as Tiamo.

It's a stroke of luck that there are four cities all at the same latitude that are fighting simultaneously. This is how the elves had been able to continue keeping the queen's location a secret—turns out it had been intentional.

After conquering Fortenia, the Demon Lord Army realized that the queen was nowhere to be found. This naturally meant she had evacuated south, so the Army continued pushing on in hot pursuit. If they had directed the full brunt of their forces against Tiamo or one of the other cities on the same latitude, it would have surely fallen. However, the elven generals did all they could to obfuscate which city the queen was in, and it worked: the Army, desperate as it

was to kill her, decided to split into four in order to launch attacks on all the cities at once. Thanks to this, all four were still standing, and Tiamo had held out just long enough until Allen's arrival.

As the queen's location was highly confidential, not even the soldiers in Tiamo knew she was here. The only people privy to that information were the select few guarding the building where she was staying. The other soldiers were only told that their efforts were directly tied to the safety of their queen. They believed this, applying themselves to their duties with burning motivation.

Ever since they arrived in Rohzenheim, the No-life Gamers had constantly been on the move. There had been no time for them to learn the details of what was happening in the war. Now that Allen had all the information he needed, however, he and his companions were able to take their next course of action.

The Gamers traveled to the three other cities, bringing three generals of Tiamo along on their Bird Bs. One general was left behind in each city—along with a certain number of “elven elixirs”—so they could inform the local generals of the situation in Tiamo and help adapt the local troops' fighting strategies around the recovery items.

Every city was filled with a huge number of injured soldiers and refugees—Tiamo alone had nearly 700,000 refugees. If their city were to fall, every last one of them would be mercilessly slaughtered and eaten by the Army's monsters. Every single elf therefore fought as though their lives depended on it; even the noncombatants were more than eager to lend a hand where needed. When Allen dropped by each city, he buffed the residents with his Fish-type Summons, which he then left behind so they could renew the buffs again every day.

Allen had done everything he could. Each city would be seeing more than 100,000 troops returning to the fight, meaning they were no longer at risk of falling within the next few days. Naturally, he expected these changes to prompt adjustments in the Demon Lord Army's strategies, but that would not be for a while. It would be hard for a force that had seen such overwhelming success for so long to suddenly pivot away from strategies that had seemed to work so well so far.

The following evening, Allen and his companions had finally returned to Tiamo and were walking down a corridor inside the largest building in Tiamo. This place within the heart of the city was where the queen was staying. Although it was a far cry from a palace that had housed generations of royalty, the interior design here truly brought to life the simplistic beauty of the wood grain.

“We’re finally back, Lord Allen!” Sophie’s bright voice greatly contrasted with the clouded look that had been on her face before the night attack.

“Yeah, finally. I have so much sleep to catch up on.” *In fact, I wanna dive into bed right this second. I don’t even care about eating—I’ll worry about that after I wake up.*

After fighting throughout the night, all the Gamers looked exhausted.

“I understand how you feel. But before that, we really should report back to Her Majesty.”

“I...suppose. Yeah, you’re right. Let’s do that.”

Allen expected Sophie to then say that she would arrange the audience, but in a welcome surprise, she started walking straight toward the room used as an audience hall, bringing the rest of them along.

She gets to go right through because she’s the queen’s daughter? Welp, works for me. Saves us the wait.

Sure enough, when the No-life Gamers arrived at the room in question, the large door was opened for them right away. This reminded Allen of how, in the games he played during his previous life, he had also been able to approach the kings and queens without ever having to make an appointment.

Another thing that Allen had learned through Spirit B was that, among those he believed were elven generals, there was one who was of an even higher position: the man he had met in Nest named Lukdraal had the rank of “field marshal.” And above Lukdraal was the grand marshal, who commanded all the military forces of Rohzenheim.

Today, the queen was sitting upon her throne. Sophie approached, the rest of the Gamers following behind. The same flying squirrel from before was perched on the queen's shoulder, and once again it met Allen's eyes.

Why's it looking at me again?

A beat later, the creature made a big yawn, then clambered down to the queen's lap, where it curled up and promptly fell asleep. Apparently the little guy was sleepy too.

Allen had fallen silent, his attention fixated on the flying squirrel, so it was the queen who spoke first. "So, how fare the other three cities?"

Allen started. "Oh, right. All of them are still standing. I left them five hundred elven elixirs each. That should be enough to help them all make a comeback."

Though doing so completely depleted my stock of Blessings of Heaven. To make more, I ended up using 2,500 Rank B magic stones. I mean, I'll probably need a lot more. Should I ask for a few planting pots so I can make more at the same time?

"WHOOOAAA! IT'S A MIRACLE!" the elven generals cheered loudly.

Since Allen was so groggy, his reply lacked his usual verve and vigor. Seeing this, Sophie took over reporting for him. She spoke of how he had buffed all the soldiers and provided enough recovery items that more than 100,000 soldiers had rejoined each city's forces. When the generals heard this, they burst into excited discussion.

"In other words, over 300,000 troops have returned to active service!"

"However, the Demon Lord Army started sending large birdlike creatures into the sky this morning. A night attack like last night's won't work again."

Apparently the enemy had bolstered its airborne forces, but Allen had no intention of attacking in person again that night.

I should probably dispatch Dora to go take care of those flying monsters, though. It's important to crush the seeds of problems as early as possible.

"Lord Allen... Thank you for everything you have done so far," the queen said from her throne, lowering her head.

“You honor me,” Allen replied.

“Thanks to your actions, the lives of many powerless elves have been saved. Please allow us to reward you in some way, Lord Allen.”

We’ve only killed 40,000 so far—there’s still 2,960,000 left to go. Ah, calculating in the number that the elves have killed as well, maybe it’s actually somewhere between 2,700,000 to 2,800,000.

According to the generals, the elves had only been able to fight defensively this whole time and therefore had not made too much of a dent in the Demon Lord Army’s forces. They had pulled in some numbers in the first day or so, but after the fall of the northernmost fortress, they had been on the back foot ever since. However, despite being so badly outnumbered and their lack of offensive capability, they had still been able to kill around 200,000 to 300,000 of the Army’s powerful monsters, which was pretty good, considering. The combined size of the elven forces, including those in Nest, Tiamo, and the other three cities that had been saved, was now around 600,000.

“The battle is far from over, so... Ah.” *Since she’s offering, there is something I can ask.*

“What is it? Do you wish to take my daughter’s hand?”

“My! Your Majesty!” Sophie blushed furiously.

“Hm? No, I don’t need that.”

There was an awkward silence.

Huh? Did a route get triggered just then? Allen’s head was so fogged up due to drowsiness that he failed to fully register what the queen had said.

“There are actually two things I want to ask.”

“O-Of course. Do tell.”

The other Gamers looked at Allen with curiosity, wondering what he would say. The elven generals also pricked up their ears.

“First thing: magic stones. Please let us collect all of them.”

“Certainly. Grand Marshal Siguul, how many magic stones do we have in

Tiamo at the moment?”

“It pains me to say so, but we used up almost all of them running the magic ships.”

In this world, magic stones were used to power all technology. Naturally, a besieged city’s supply would be cut off and its stock would gradually decline. The residents of Tiamo were already struggling to make do with what little they had remaining.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I wasn’t clear enough. I was talking about the magic stones from the monsters we killed.”

“Ah, in that case, feel absolutely free. What is the second thing?”

“Please let me meet the Sovereign of Spirits.”

“I’m sorry? You want to speak with Lord Rohzen?”

The rest of the elves burst into a commotion. Allen wondered if this was because they were leery of letting an outsider stand before the very being they worshipped, what with everything he had heard of elves being a race that shunned outsiders.

“Is it...too much to ask?”

“Well...I can help you check.”

“Thank you very much.”

Suddenly, the flying squirrel that had been sleeping all this time opened its eyes and looked straight at Allen.

“I am Rohzen. Summoner of the Beginning, what business do you have with me?”

“THE FLYING SQUIRREL IS TALKING!!!” Allen’s shout reverberated throughout the room. He was so surprised that his fatigue was dispelled in the blink of an eye.

As it turned out, the flying squirrel was the Sovereign of Spirits—the spirit said to have climbed the ranks all the way to becoming a Minor Deity.



“Well, what do you want with me?” pressed the flying squirrel, which still lay sprawled out in a relaxed position, as if its—no, as if *his* talking was the most natural thing in the world.

So the sleep talking Sovereign of Spirits turned out to be this tiny creature all along.

The elven generals were all standing to attention, keeping their backs stiff as rods and trying to breathe as softly as possible. Clearly, this was a very rare occurrence.

Allen stood up straight. “Before anything else, I want to give you my thanks. Thank you for making an MP Recovery Ring for me.”

The Hero did set a condition when passing it to me, but I don’t really have to get into it.

According to Helmios, Rohzen had prophesied Allen’s advent and made this ring specially for him. And because Helmios had saved an elven squad that had been about to be wiped out, he had received one too. That made it a total of two MP Recovery Rings that Rohzen had made.

“Oh right, I did do that, didn’t I. You’re welcome. The Hero pressed me for it. Ha ha.”

Right, I heard that he had come to pick it up just before he arrived in Ratash.

In order to convince Allen to participate in the Martial Arts Tournament at his Academy and display the power that Rohzen had prophesied, the Hero had come all the way to Rohzenheim to retrieve the MP Recovery Ring.

“Lord Rohzen, there is something else that I want to ask of you.”

“And that is?”

Allen’s companions stared at him in a daze, astonished at how he had already accepted both the presence and appearance of the Sovereign of Spirits and begun conversing normally with him. The same went for the queen and the elven generals. They listened to the exchange with their fair share of surprise, curious to see where it would go.

“Currently, we are fighting with the elves against the Demon Lord Army.

When we successfully save Rohzenheim, may I have one wish granted?" Allen bowed in entreaty.

"Meaning you want this as a reward for saving the country."

"Yes, My Lord."

"I see." The flying squirrel rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Incidentally, what is that wish?"

"I want all my companions to be put in Hell Mode."

This was the first time Allen had ever uttered the phrase "Hell Mode" since being born into this world. The unfamiliar term prompted Cecil to repeat it out loud in a puzzled tone. The rest of the Gamers also looked mystified.

The Sovereign of Spirits looked up into the air with his hand still stroking his chin. "Huh? 'Hell Mode'? Wait, it's... Huh?" He seemed to recognize the term but seemed to be having trouble remembering what it meant.

Allen nodded. "Yes, My Lord. Hell Mode. The principle that makes the Trials of the Gods a hundred times more difficult."

"Ahhh, so that's what you meant. The varying levels of difficulty for the Trials."

"Yes, My Lord. All my party members are in Normal Mode, and they've already capped out their levels. I pray you will be able to put them all in Hell Mode so they can continue their development."

"I see. I understand what you're asking. Hold on, I'll check."

The flying squirrel then froze in place.

Hey, he turned into a stuffed animal.

Suddenly, Cecil's arm snaked around Allen's neck from behind. She brought her face closer and whispered furiously into his ear, "What was all that about something-mode you were discussing with the Lord Sovereign just now?! Are you sure you can just ask him for stuff like that?!"

"Probably? I mean, I imagine the elves would've stopped me otherwise."

During their exchange, the body of the Sovereign of Spirits relaxed again.

“I just asked Lord Elmea, but I’m sorry, he said it’s straight-up impossible to change someone’s Mode.”

“So even Extra Mode is off the table?”

“I’d say so. At least, I wouldn’t be able to make it happen. Ha ha.”

Is that because as a Minor Deity, he doesn’t have much authority in the Heavenly Realm?

“That is disappointing to hear. In that case, may I change my wish to something else?”

“If you’ll be saving my precious elves, then I’ll do my best within my means. Ha ha.”

“Then please allow my party members to promote their classes. For example, changing a Swordsman to a Sword Lord.”

That instant, the Sovereign of Spirit’s laid-back atmosphere turned razor-sharp. He looked straight into Allen’s eyes, but the boy returned the gaze, not looking ruffled in the least.

A short while later, the flying squirrel broke eye contact and sighed. “I see, so you’re someone who already knows the principles of the world. Little wonder that you’re on Lord Elmea’s mind.”

“Huh? He’s spoken of me?” *I wonder what they say about me up there in the Heavenly Realm.*

“Yep, quite a while ago. Supposedly, you were thinking about becoming a Demon Lord, so Lord Elmea hurriedly created ‘Summoner’ for you to choose instead. He had meant to give it only six stars but accidentally gave it eight instead. So he tried to dissuade you from choosing it by telling you that it was a class that was still in testing. However, you refused to change it any further, leaving him at a bit of a loss. Ha ha.”

I see, it was because of a god’s careless mistake that Summoner ended up an eight-star class. It’s been ages since, but I do faintly remember a pop-up message asking something along the lines of, “Are you sure you want to choose Summoner?”

Allen had just learned the story of how his class came to be in the most unexpected of situations, but all of that did not matter right now. He directed the conversation back to the topic at hand.

“So then, how about it? Or is it that you can only do it for the elves and not the humans?”

An inordinately high percentage of the elves were healers, almost as if someone was intentionally making it this way. Allen suspected that someone was Rohzen, thinking that he likely had both the means as a Minor Deity with access to the Heavenly Realm, and the motive as the one worshipped by all the elves, since he would understandably want to give them a hand up. This was why Allen had tried using a loaded question.

To be honest, he had not expected his request to change Modes to be granted. However, based on everything that he knew, he thought that changing classes ought to be possible.

“‘Not the humans,’ huh? You’ve got quite the mouth on you, I see. So this is why Lord Elmea’s having trouble handling you. Ha ha.” The flying squirrel scratched his head, looking troubled.

So he was messing with the numbers. Well, Rohzenheim’s population isn’t all that high, since the elves don’t have children easily. If they were to lose their longevity and healing prowess, the race might just die out altogether.

“Is it possible to do, then?”

“Well...giving a Talentless person a Talent is completely different from changing a Talented person’s Talent to something else. Doing so would require payment of some sort.”

“And the feat of saving Rohzenheim is insufficient as payment?”

“I’m afraid my powers alone would not be enough. While changing Talents would serve as the reward for saving Rohzenheim, I would still need payment to make it happen regardless. For example, someone’s life span.”

Life span? Ahhh, I see what he means. I like those terms.

Everyone was dumbstruck by this talk of exchanging one’s life span for a

different Talent—they interpreted it as a deal so weighty that they would have to give up years of their own life for it. Allen was the only one among them who correctly understood the meaning behind Rohzen’s words.

“Would it be enough to give up all the experience we accrued along the way to reaching the limits of our progression?”

When you say “life span,” it doesn’t have to be our future years, right? The time and effort that we’ve already spent would do just as well, wouldn’t it?

“What? You sure you want to do that? Losing all your experience means you’ll go back to being Lvl. 1, though.”

“Not a problem. Would skills unrelated to our classes, such as, say, Sword Mastery, be left untouched?”

After freezing for another short while, the Sovereign of Spirits replied, “All right, that would do. However, when I do it, I can only raise your companions’ classes by one star. And four-stars is the highest I can go. Five-star classes are beyond me.”

“Thank you very much, My Lord.”

“I won’t be doing this for any members of your party who aren’t here at the moment or who’ll be joining your party later, okay?”

Dammit, I was thinking of having him promote Meruru later too.

Allen straightened his face and replied, “I wouldn’t dare ask, My Lord.”

To make sure that Allen did not get any funny ideas, Rohzen warned, “Just saying, I can read your mind. Ha ha.”

“My apologies. Now, about my—”

All this talk about getting a class promotion would not benefit Allen directly. Therefore, he was about to negotiate for his own reward when Rohzen cut him off.

“I said, I can read your mind. Summoner of the Beginning, you have a younger sister, yes? I believe her name is Myulla. She’s Talentless, so how about I give her a Talent? You get to choose whichever you want. I’ll...hear you out...another time...”

The Sovereign of Spirits was starting to nod off. He was apparently reading Allen's mind in order to wrap up the conversation as quickly as possible.

"Thank you, My Lord. I shall give it my all to save Rohzenheim."

"Mm...make sure that you do..."

After one final mumble, the Sovereign of Spirits fell asleep once more in the queen's lap.

Watching him is making me sleepy again.

Through this negotiation, Allen had secured a way for his companions to become even stronger. And for himself, he had garnered a promise that the Sovereign would give his younger sister a Talent. When he relaxed his shoulders, a powerful wave of weariness washed over him.

Many of the No-life Gamers only had one-star classes: Dogora, Keel, Sophie, and Volmaar. Allen worried that they would have difficulty keeping up in the fights ahead. As such, he had always been searching for a way to either change their Modes or their Talents. Thanks to the involvement of the Sovereign of Spirits, this war against the Demon Lord Army in Rohzenheim now effectively served double duty as a class-promotion quest. The battles that awaited them beyond this war were sure to be even more challenging, but now they had a new hope to cling to.

* * *

Night broke, and the next day arrived. According to the elven scouts, although the Demon Lord Army did not attack the day before, it had indeed finished restoring its command structure. Several hours later, they were once again marching on Tiamo.

That morning, Allen was summoned to one of the rooms inside the building sheltering the queen. When he arrived, he found his companions sitting at a large round table with Cecil at the head.

"Good morning, Allen," she said before gesturing toward the only empty seat—the one directly across from her own. "Sit there."

"Uh...good morning, Lady Cecil. As you command."

“What’s that? You want me to choke you first?”

“Er...I’m sorry.”

After starting off by declaring this gathering a “witness summoning” and strictly warning Allen not to weasel his way out, Cecil then proceeded to demand that he explain the meaning of his discussion with Rohzen the previous day and the thought process that had led him to posing such a request to the Sovereign of Spirits.

After yesterday’s audience, Allen had immediately gone to bed. Then, in preparation for today’s fight, he had woken up before the sun had even risen and had been making Blessings of Heaven ever since. Talking things out with his companions was important, but so was restocking recovery items. With everyone’s permission, he placed a planter on top of the table to resume his task before continuing the conversation.

“Well, out with it. What were you talking about with Lord Rohzen yesterday?”

Many words that Cecil had never heard before—not once throughout all their years together at the Granvelle mansion, at the Academy, and in the base—had been bandied about the day before, such as “Hell Mode” and “class promotion.” Their talk even touched on the God of Creation, Elmea, at times. All Cecil had understood was that it was all somehow related to Allen’s previously unheard-of Talent of Summoner and the wealth of knowledge regarding dungeon delving that he seemed to possess before ever setting foot inside of one.

Krena looked at Allen quizzically. Sophie directed her eyes, sparkling with expectation, his way as well. She, as did all elves, held Rohzen in a special place in her heart. After seeing Allen, the promised savior, converse with Rohzen as his equal, her evaluation of the boy had shot through the roof. Volmaar, in turn, was watching Sophie with concern.

Meanwhile, Dogora and Keel adopted the attitude of spectators. Considering everything else they had experienced while with Allen, they did not believe there was much that would surprise them anymore. As such, they chose to simply watch as Cecil confronted Allen.

Why was I keeping the fact that I’m reincarnated a secret again? Oh right,

because I was worried that people would think I was possessed by a demon or something.

Allen had been born into this world as a serf, the lowest rung on the social ladder. If he, someone considered inferior to commoners, started talking about how he had memories of a past life, he might be hounded or, worst case, be subjected to an unfair trial and put away somewhere. These fears were why he had not even told his parents.

What about now, though? Is there any disadvantage to revealing the truth here?

The boy looked at each of his companions in turn and knew without a doubt that they would accept him *and* his truth.

I...see. I no longer have any reason to keep quiet.

“My conversation with Lord Rohzen...might have been hard to understand without some prerequisite knowledge. I—Allen—was brought to this world by Elmea, the God of Creation. Put simply, I came here from a different world. My memories and knowledge from that other world are still in my head right now, and I’ve been using them to understand the underlying principles behind how this world works.”

“Huh? What are you sa— But... Hmm...”

Cecil was about to deny what he was saying, but then recalled everything he had done so far. He had hurtled through dungeons that no one had cleared before with unbelievable speed and had gotten through so many crises with ideas and strategies that no normal person would come up with. She thought all the way back to when she had been kidnapped from the Granvelle mansion by the hired guns from House Carnel. Allen’s explanation seemed to answer so many questions that had always plagued her.

Sophie clapped her hands together. “Oh my! In other words, Lord Elmea determined that you were worthy of being a savior and selected you?!”

“Nah, Elmea didn’t actually say anything to me aside from, ‘Enjoy your life in this world.’ He’s never made contact to ask me to do anything.”

“Which is only natural. The gods merely oversee and do not intervene. Lord

Rohzen usually never says anything.”

The way Sophie interpreted Allen’s circumstances was that, as Elmea could not directly intervene in the mortal world, he had selected Allen—in whom he saw the makings of a savior—to act on his behalf.

Oh, so the deities are generally not allowed to take direct action in this world. If I had to guess, Rohzen gets a bit of leeway in this regard because he’s still only a Minor Deity. That’s how he’s able to do things for us, but even he cannot personally save the elves from the Demon Lord Army invasion.

“So that’s why Allen always seems to be having so much fun!” Krena recalled that he had been this way since forever, from back when they were serfs all the way to when they went dungeon delving together. Dogora also nodded with comprehension.

“By the way, how old were you in that other world?” Cecil asked out of curiosity. Now that she understood how Allen came to this world, she suddenly remembered the various instances when he seemed to act or speak older than his age.

“Thirty-five.”

“What? So old?”

Uh, rude? Thirty-five is still plenty young, thank you very much.

In this world, thirty-five was considered rather advanced in years. Cecil’s reaction was actually quite natural.

“My! So that means you’re the same age as me, Lord Allen!”

“I...guess that’s what the math works out to.” The average age of our class was thirteen, but she was forty-eight when she transferred in. Adding the thirty-five years from my past life to my thirteen in this life would make me forty-eight years old. I guess we really are the same age.

Sophie had been so eager to meet the person prophesied by Rohzen that she had somehow managed to get herself enrolled despite her age. The process had most likely involved using some special privilege tied to being one of the superpowers at the Five Continent Alliance table. From Allen’s perspective, the

concept of backdoor admission was even more of a mystery than his own reincarnation.

Suddenly, something came to Allen's mind. "Oh, there's one thing I *must* say."

"There's something else?" Cecil pursed her lips. "Go on, tell us everything."

"No matter the world, I've never failed at defeating the Demon Lord. Every single one I've encountered, I've killed. Killing Demon Lords was common sense in my world."

Among gamers, that is. But I probably don't need to make the distinction.

"What? You've killed *multiple* Demon Lords before?!"

"That's right, Krena. All Demon Lords are targets for extermination."

"Whoaaaa! Targets for extermination!" Krena threw both her hands up in excitement as everyone else looked on speechlessly.

The way he told it, Allen had come from a world where squashing any being as much of a threat as the Demon Lord was simply a matter of course. His companions could not even begin to imagine what his world was like.

"But yep, now all of you get to change classes."

Cecil cracked a rare smirk. "Which means I get to become an Archwizardess. Guh heh heh..."

Damn, did Cecil just say "Guh heh heh"? I guess that's just how big being an Archwizard or Archwizardess is for those who use magic like her. Hmm, what classes does everyone else get?

Current Party Members' Classes

- One-star: Ax User (Dogora), Cleric (Keel), Spirit Mage (Sophie), Archer (Volmaar)
- Two-star: Wizardess (Cecil)
- Three-star: Sword Lord (Krena)

Allen grinned. “Well, Archwizardess is still only three-star. I wonder what your four-star class would be.”

“Huh? What’re you saying? Did you not hear everything because you were too sleepy? The Sovereign of Spirits did say four-star classes is the highest he can go, but he also said that he can only raise our classes by one star.”

Cecil and the others understood the system of rating a class by stars. Her point was that if she, a two-star, could only be promoted by one star, then the highest she could go would be Archwizardess.

“But see, he never said he can only do it *once*.”

“Wait, are you...”

“Naturally, after all of you reach Lvl. 60 again, we’ll go ask for another promotion. It took a while the first time because we had to first go through Rank C dungeons. The second time around, it’ll probably take us less than a year. And we won’t even have to attend classes at the same time.”

“That’s... Isn’t that asking for too much?”

“No, Cecil.” Allen smirked with his wicked face. “We had an agreement, and all we’re doing is asking him to make good on his word. We *are* going to have him raise all of you to a four-star class, just as he promised.”

During the discussion with the Sovereign of Spirits, Allen had purposely not touched on the number of times his party would be able to seek the promotion.

Thanks to Rohzen getting sleepy near the end, the conversation ended before we got to that question. When he said that he could read my mind, it seriously gave me a fright.

Surprisingly, Sophie was the first one to get onboard with Allen’s scheme. “That makes sense. So it means I’m going to become Rohzenheim’s second Spirit User? Guh heh heh...”

Even Sophie just went “Guh heh heh.” Oh right, there was mention of Rohzenheim’s one and only Spirit User being in Tiamo at the moment.

“Well, that’s all I have to share.” Allen stood up. “It’s time to prepare for battle. We’re definitely gonna win this war and get all of you promoted!”

Krena nodded emphatically. “Mm-hm! Let’s do our best!”

The rest of the No-life Gamers all exchanged looks, hope glinting in their eyes. They now had a new common goal: the class promotion!

Chapter 5: Defense of Tiamo

When their discussion was over, the group had a late breakfast. During their meal, Allen added that what he had just shared was for their ears only. He did not think there would be any benefit if the world at large knew of his background.

Once his position became clear, he would be constantly dogged with propositions. He might be able to turn them all down if he had sufficient power or status, but since he did not, he would eventually be forced to affiliate himself with one group or another, be it the Ratashian royal family or otherwise. No matter how things ended up, however, one thing was certain: he would never again have the same amount of freedom he currently enjoyed.

When they heard his reasoning, the rest of Allen's companions thought this very characteristic of him and conveyed their understanding.

* * *

Even while reforming their lines, the Demon Lord Army began inching toward Tiamo. Their foremost lines were now around a kilometer away from the city walls.

The forces located at each cardinal direction numbered 30,000 each once more. The main camp in the north was now around 100,000 strong, whereas the reinforcements to the south numbered 40,000. More than 200,000 monsters at least Rank B in strength roared at the top of their lungs in unison, shaking the city to its core. The sound convinced many of the elves who had failed to escape to Nest in time that the world was ending.

Some elves were in Tiamo with their families, ready to die together. Some had already lost their important ones along the way here. The refugee shelters set up all across the city were filled to bursting. Ever since the northernmost fortress had fallen, noncombatant citizens from the capital and the northern settlements had been fleeing south, their rear protected by troops desperately holding back the tide of monsters. Those refugees were now packed inside

Tiamo with little more than elbow room. This was the very city that had been encircled by the Demon Lord Army for several days straight.

The monsters could overrun the walls at any given moment, and the elves knew full well that it would be impossible to escape from this city with the magic ships. They now prayed to the Sovereign of Spirits and their queen with every fiber of their beings.

The soldiers along the tops of the ten-meter walls glared at the approaching ranks of monsters. They did not know that their queen was within this city, but they had been told that she was in one of several cities still fighting. Regardless of whether she was in this city or another one, their efforts contributed to keeping the Demon Lord Army in the dark and buying time. That was more than enough for them as a reason.

Over the past month, they had been frantically fighting while constantly getting pushed back, accumulating wounds and injuries as they retreated from the settlements in succession. It would be a lie to say that they were not afraid—when the fighting began, some of the monsters could scale the ten-meter wall like it was nothing. However, they refused to give in to their terror. Why? Because they had witnessed a miracle just the day before.

Their brothers-in-arms whom they had believed on the verge of death now stood shoulder to shoulder with them, fit as a fiddle. At this moment, there were no injured soldiers at all in this entire city. A total of 200,000 elves now stood at the ready—some along the walls, some on the ground, all clutching their bows or other weapons and bracing themselves for the coming battle.

Those with the Archer Talent—naturally, Lvl. 60 and in Normal Mode—made up the bulk of the elven force. Being fully trained, they could all shoot arrows as far as one kilometer. They now waited in silence for a signal from their commanders. Those who could use Spirit Magic also stood at the ready with their healing spells and buffs.

As the monsters slowly marched forward, one starving troll suddenly broke formation and started running. Worried that they would miss out on food that day if they were to fall behind, the other monsters also began charging forward, pushing each other aside. Before long, the same thing had started happening in

all four directions. The elves had seen this same thing happen every day now.

Atop the walls, one of the generals shouted, “Never forget! The Sovereign of Spirits is with us!”

An earth-shattering roar went up in response.

“This time, we’ll make sure we finally protect Her Majesty!”

Another roar rattled the walls.

Many times now, the troops had been forced to abandon cities and fortresses and left them to be overrun. This time, however, the troops were determined to make their stand. The day’s battle kicked off with the elven soldiers’ morale the highest it had ever been.

Bows twanged in unison, releasing countless arrows flying toward the Demon Lord Army. Still, the monsters pressed on, even with many arrows sprouting from their bodies, especially those with high HP and self-regenerative powers such as ogres and trolls. Before long, the tide of bodies crashed against the walls, sending tremors deep into the city. The archers took desperate aim at the monsters’ heads and eyes, turning them into pincushions.

Strangely, their officers had ordered them to fight with everything they had with no concern for rationing their MP. They obediently spammed their skills, shooting up the monsters starting from the front lines.

“At this rate, we’re gonna run out of MP in an hour,” one of the soldiers muttered with unease.

However, the officers repeated: “Don’t hold anything back! Use all your MP! Focus solely on killing the enemy! The Sovereign of Spirits is with us!”

Before long, the soldiers noticed that something was off.

For some reason, they were evading attacks that they were sure should have landed.

For some reason, they were landing more Critical Hits than normal.

For some reason, they were surviving hits that they had thought would have killed them.

It did not take time for all these observations to lead the soldiers to a certain conviction: they were now living through a miracle. What else could this be but the blessing of the Sovereign of Spirits?

It was only natural for the elves to believe a miracle was taking place. Before the start of the battle, Allen had used the Abilities of all his Fish-type Summons on every last one of the 200,000 elven troops.

Fish D's Ability, Spray, buffed evasion of physical and magical attacks by 10%. Fish C's Ability, Shark Oil, increased the rate of landing Critical Hits by 10%. Fish B's Ability, Turtle Shield, reduced all incoming damage—including physical, magical, and even breath—by 20%. All these buffs lasted for twenty-four hours.

A difference of ten or twenty percent might be negligible in small numbers, but it all added up in a prolonged battle at this scale. The elven force was now even more tenacious, hitting back harder than before.

Exasperated at the lack of progress, a dragon that towered even taller than the city walls shoved its way through the other monsters to reach the front. It raised its mouth toward the sky, building up a blinding light within.

An officer shouted, "BREATH ATTACK INCOMIIIIING!" prompting the elves to drop and cover.

The next instant, the dragon unleashed a stream of incandescent fire that swallowed up everyone on the wall within dozens of meters, leaving them on the verge of death.

The nearest general, who had been keeping an eye on the situation, immediately raised a red peach high above his head, crying out, "The Sovereign blesses us with his miracles!"

Immediately, the peach disappeared into bubbles of light. Elves with hideously burned skin who were on death's door got back on their feet, astonished to find themselves with even their depleted MP fully refilled. When they realized that they had returned to peak condition, they exchanged looks with each other. Then they looked around and noticed that even those who had not fallen victim to the dragon breath no longer bore any of the wounds they had suffered from the fighting so far either. It was as if everyone's time had been reversed, and there was no telling just how far the phenomenon had

reached. It truly was a miracle.

Before the start of the fight, Allen had given the twenty generals of this city twenty Blessings of Heaven each, explaining their effects. Each general commanded 10,000 troops, and it was up to their discretion when and how to use these recovery items, possibly even passing them on to their subordinates.

Structure of the Elven Army

- The grand marshal is the chief commander of the army, and there is only one person in this position. Grand Marshal Siguul commands the field marshals and generals.
- There are two field marshals, one of whom is Field Marshal Lukdraal. They command the generals.
- A general has command of 10,000 troops. They give their orders to colonels and, as they have a certain amount of authority to make their own judgment calls, will work in cooperation with each other. Each general is supported by several lieutenant generals.
- A colonel has command of 1,000 troops. This is called a battalion, and each battalion is composed of five companies. Each colonel is supported by several lieutenant colonels.
- A major has command of 200 troops. This is called a company, and each company had a specialization, e.g., a certain weapon or class. Each major is supported by several captains.

“Stop zoning out! Kill the dragon!”

The soldiers came back to themselves at the barks from their officers and unloaded all their arrows at the dragon. Two-star Bow Masters would normally struggle to take down a dragon, but thanks to Shark Oil, even the one-star Archers were landing Critical Hits one after another, gouging out chunks of the

massive monster's HP. Soon enough, the beast fell over backward, arrows sprouting from every inch of its body, and crushed many more monsters underneath it.

The battle continued until half the monsters in all four directions had died. Just as the elves thought they just might make it through, a column of dust went up in the south.

* * *

The Demon Lord Army had realized that, to its surprise, the battle was not going in its favor. Consequently, the 40,000 that had been standing at the ready to the south decided to move out to bolster the southern front.

The monsters were attacking the city from all four directions at once. It did not matter which side they breached—they only needed to create one point of entry large enough to rush through, and the entire city would fall. So the reinforcements stayed in the south with the intention of breaking through with sheer numbers.

Despair overcame the elven soldiers when they saw the number of monsters that they had worked so hard to whittle down suddenly bounce back to more than double what they had started with.

“All that's happened is that there's more of them!” an officer shouted in a desperate bid to raise the soldiers' faltering morale back up. “Victory is still with us!”

The No-life Gamers looked down at the fight from high up in the sky, three kilometers away from Tiamo.

Looks like the battle at all four cities is coming to a climax. All of them seem to be standing strong. Wow, I'm getting so much XP!

Tiamo was not the only city currently under attack. The other three along the same latitude as Tiamo similarly protecting the south from the Demon Lord Army were also in the thick of battle. Just now, Allen had once again visited all three with his companions to buff up the soldiers there with his Fish-type Summons. From what he could glean with Hawk Eye, the elves were putting up a great fight. And as the one who cast the buffs, Allen was now receiving XP

from all four theaters. The log on the cover of his grimoire was flying by so quickly it looked like a blank page.

Soon, the Gamers reached within five hundred meters of Tiamo. They descended in altitude, stopping close to the ground to examine the monsters from a distance.

“Looks like we got back in time,” Allen noted. “The reinforcements in the south have only just started moving.”

Going to all three cities to pass out more Blessings of Heaven really took some time.

Cecil nodded. “So it seems. Do we go in now?”

“Of course,” Allen replied before flipping the pages of his grimoire. “But before that, lemme see how many Summoning slots I have left... Thirty-eight, it seems.”

Summons Currently Summoned (Total: 32)

- 2x in Rodan Village for surveillance and protection
- 1x in the Granvelle mansion for communication
- 14x at the front lines on the Central Continent
- 2x in Nest for communication and combat
- 8x total in the four cities currently under attack for communication and combat
- 5x Bird Bs as mounts for the No-life Gamers

The Gamers used to ride seven Bird Bs in total. However, in order to conserve the number of Summon slots that Allen had, they decided to take advantage of the fact that the griffins were more than big enough to carry two people riding tandem. As such, Cecil was now riding with Allen, and Sophie with Volmaar. Krena and Dogora, however, still rode one Bird B each because they needed the mobility fighting in the vanguard.

“Is thirty-eight enough?” Cecil asked worriedly, peering into Allen’s grimoire

from over his shoulder. “Are you sure you don’t want to Unsummon some of those on the Central Continent? You sent them a lot of recovery items already, so can’t you afford to decrease the number of Summons there?”

A group of Summons had spent several days making their way to the northern part of the Central Continent. Allen had given them recovery items to bring with them, the idea being that he would use the slots of those that died here in Rohzenheim.

“Nah, the fighting’s about to start on that side, so this would be a bad time to reduce them,” Allen replied before making his Bird B fly parallel to Tiamo’s wall as he Summoned a total of thirty Insect Bs, spacing them out a hundred meters apart to cover a total of three kilometers. He also called out five Dragon Bs, which left him with only three available slots.

Through Bird F’s Transmission, he then ordered all the Insect Bs to use Spawn, their Awakened Ability. They obliged, each producing a hundred giant eggs each. The three thousand eggs quickly disappeared into bubbles of light and were replaced with what looked like half-sized Insect Bs.

What Spawn did was create a hundred offspring with half of an Insect B’s size and stats. The cooldown time was a day, and in light of the fact that Summons could stay Summoned for thirty days at a time, one Insect B could use Spawn a maximum of thirty times.

Allen named these smaller Antsys “Lil Antsys.” Even if they were not killed, they could only live for a month at most, as they would disappear with their parents when their thirty days were up. Similarly, when their parent was returned to a card, the offspring would disappear with it.

Status of the Lil Antsys Created Through Spawn	
Name:	Lil Antsy
HP:	1,300
MP:	500
Attack:	1,200
Endurance:	2,000 (Strengthened Parent)
Agility:	2,000 (Strengthened Parent)

Intelligence: 1,000

Luck: 900

Ability: Formic Acid

(All values are half of its Insect B parent.)

“All Antsys, order your Lil Antsys to march forward.”

The thirty Insect Bs chittered and clacked loudly in response to Allen’s command, signaling for their Lil Antsys to begin marching toward the monsters. Although they were considered young, these were still five-meter-tall ants, and there were three thousand of them. What was more, Allen had raised the parents’ Endurance and Agility to 4,000 using Strengthening beforehand, which meant all their spawn had 2,000 in both stats.

“Keel! Sophie! Buffs, please! Then we’ll be joining the fight!”

“Gotcha!”

“Of course, Lord Allen!”

While Keel and Sophie cast their spells on both their fellow Gamers and Allen’s Summons, Allen gave out instructions to more Summons.

“Belly and Finny, use your Abilities and Awakened Abilities!”

Although Fish D and C could not speak, they expressed their acknowledgment by swimming a tight circle in the ground before heading off to cast their buffs.

“Genbu, please also use Turtle Shield and Turtle Barrier on all of us.”

Chuckling like an old man, Fish B replied, “You got it, son! Time for this old sack of bones to get a move on!” before similarly diving into the ground. With only the top of the shell on its back visible, it went around repeatedly using its Ability.

While Turtle Shield reduced incoming damage by 20%, Turtle Barrier did so for 50%. The two were stackable, such that when they were both active, they worked together to reduce incoming damage by a total of 60%. This mitigation applied for all kinds of damage, including physical, magical, and even breath. Turtle Shield applied to all allies within fifty meters for twenty-four hours,

whereas Turtle Shield applied to all allies within a hundred meters for one hour.

Good. That should save all my companions from getting one-shotted by anything short of Helmios's Extra Skill.

Allen recalled his fight with the Hero at the Academy. At the time, Allen had used both Turtle Shield and Turtle Barrier, but Helmios's strike had still left him severely wounded. Allen once again appreciated how powerful Helmios was.

All right, let's go!

Upon confirming that the buffing was complete, Allen shouted, "All units, charge!"

Chittering loudly, the huge force of Summons rushed toward the back of the Demon Lord Army. Before they made contact, the Dragon Bs drew first blood, melting swathes of monsters with their breath attacks. When the Lil Antsys got close enough, Allen instructed them to use their Ability, Formic Acid. The three-kilometer-long line of giant ants obliged, shooting acid from their behinds.

Antsys and Lil Antsys both shared the Formic Acid Ability, which sprayed an acid dozens of meters in front of them that lowered victims' Endurance and resistances. This was especially effective against monsters with corporeal forms, and some monsters with no resistance to poison simply died outright.

"Keep spraying! Spray it everywhere!"

The Insect B Summons obeyed and continued spamming their Ability. The elven soldiers were surprised to see the giant ants approaching the monsters from the rear; just as they were wondering whether they were friend or foe, they heard the bellowing of their officers, who had been told beforehand to not attack Allen's Summons.

"The ants are our reinforcements! Do not shoot them! And don't attack the flying dragons either! Focus only on the monsters closest to you!"

The elven soldiers did as they were told, quickly shifting their attention back to the monsters they had been aiming at just now. As they did so, the Dragon Bs continued reducing members of the Demon Lord Army to cinders while Cecil spammed wind elemental spells from the back of the Bird B she shared with Allen.

The reason Cecil was not using fire spells was because she figured that any monsters still alive after suffering Dragon B's breath even with lowered resistance from Insect B's acid were probably extremely resistant to fire. Ever since Allen obtained Dragon B as a Summon, she had not had as many occasions to use Fire Magic.

The Lil Antsys continued making inroads into the Demon Lord Army's ranks, spraying acid everywhere. The monsters with lowered Endurance then fell easily to the elves' arrows, dying one after another in quick succession.

"Don't let any of them get away!" Allen shouted. "Kill every last one!"

Of course, this was a battle to protect the city of Tiamo, but at the same time, Allen saw this as an opportunity to refill his depleted stock of magic stones. After making enough Blessings of Heaven to supply four cities with, he now only had around a thousand Rank B magic stones left, which would barely last him through the day's battle. This was another reason why he had set his sights on the southern front, where the monsters were the most numerous. However, just killing the monsters did nothing for him; he needed to actually harvest the stones. In order to do this safely, he had to make sure that everything was properly dead within the area. For once, he was actually feeling quite desperate.

Krena and Dogora were also giving it their all, brandishing their weapons against monsters that wielded ones larger than themselves. Some monsters lost their gall and turned to retreat, only to find Lil Antsys waiting for them. The giant ants clamped their large mandibles together with more than enough strength to kill Rank B monsters, ensuring that none got away.

I guess the Antsys really are the most useful in a large-scale fight. Numbers mean power. I'm surprised how much the Lil Antsys can achieve even though I can't Strengthen or Awaken them.

The buffs from other Summons were effective on Lil Antsys, but not any of Allen's other Summoner skills. This meant he could not use Strengthening, Sharing, or Awakening on them. Even so, they had proven themselves so effective that he could not help but be impressed.

Before long, one Lil Antsy clamped its jaws around the last monster and it fell

dead among the thousands and thousands of corpses that spread all the way in the distance.

Annihilation complete. No Rank S monster showed up.

Allen was staring blankly at the battlefield, lost in contemplation over how the battle had gone, when he was suddenly brought back to his senses by the triumphant roar thundering from the walls of Tiamo.

Oh right, we're done on this side, but the other three sides are still fighting.

“Doras and Antsys, go support the fighting on the east and west. A few of you, stay behind to harvest the magic stones.”

Just as ordered, the Summons split up into two groups and headed off to their designated sides with several hundred Lil Antsys remaining in the south. They used their powerful mandibles to make large cuts in the monsters' bellies so that Spirits Bs could then easily reach inside to grab the magic stones. The No-life Gamers themselves also split into two groups and headed to the eastern and western fronts to kill as many more monsters as they could.

It took less than an hour for the monsters that suddenly found themselves attacked on their flank to fall into a panic and flee north. Even though Allen's group had yet to engage the monsters in the north, they were already quite spent fighting the elves. When they regrouped with those coming from the east and west, the entire force decided to just retreat outright.

The elves trumpeted their victory from the walls and rooftops. The siege of Tiamo was finally over, and the elves had won.

Chapter 6: Strategy Meeting (Part 1)

All four cities, including Tiamo, had successfully repelled the Demon Lord Army. Up to this point, it had taken them all they had just to fend off the Army's advances and kill a token number of monsters. They had struggled to remain standing until sunset, when the tide of monsters would temporarily recede to rest and resupply. After an entire month, the elves had been severely spent and were convinced that their end was only a matter of time.

However, the results of the day's battles were entirely different. The generals all sounded uncharacteristically excited as they reported to the queen.

When Allen first arrived at Tiamo, he had determined that he ought to prioritize first clearing away the monsters that were practically knocking on the city's gates over all else. As such, he had left a Spirit B to attend the strategy meetings with the queen and other generals in his stead. Today, however, he would have to discuss how to proceed, so he had come in person.

"Reporting on the results of today's battle!" one of the generals shouted. "Your Majesty, all four cities together have killed over 200,000 monsters today!"

The queen unconsciously leaned all the way forward in her throne. "Do you speak true?!" she exclaimed in astonishment. Rohzen remained on her lap, curled up in sleep.

"Yes, Your Majesty. The gains at Tiamo were particularly of note: we killed more than 100,000 here alone!"

Nice, that means the Demon Lord Army's forces currently in Rohzenheim are now down to two and a half million. Let's keep bringing that number down!

This meeting was taking place well into the night because the results of today's battle had been so incredible that it took this long to take full stock of everything. Even though it was so late, the queen and her generals were in such high spirits that they were almost beside themselves. No one could blame

them.

Transmission, the Awakened Ability of one of Allen's Summons, had proved extremely useful for communicating back and forth with the three other cities. Before long, news of their overwhelming victory had spread throughout all four cities, eliciting thunderous cheers and celebration from soldiers and refugees alike. It was said that the elves were a calm and mild-mannered race, but their joy at their unprecedented victory was exploding in unending praise of both the queen and the Sovereign of Spirits, with cries of "Long live Her Majesty!" and "Long live Lord Rohzen!" filling the air.

After a while, however, the queen's face turned grave. "Now...what were our casualties?"

The general she was addressing hung his head for a second, but then looked back up to return her gaze. "In total, roughly three thousand soldiers died across all four cities today."

"I see..."

The large majority of elven soldiers were archers, a role that was usually associated with having low Endurance. What was more, they were wearing mithril armor at best while facing Rank B and A monsters. Although they had been buffed, many had died instantly from a single attack, while many others had been unable to receive healing in time. Even so, the number of today's casualties was much, much lower compared to what it had been before. Without Allen's Summons' buffs and all the recovery items, more than ten times that number of elves might have died today.

The queen closed her eyes to observe a moment of silence for the fallen, wordlessly swearing to their valiant souls that their deaths would be avenged. The generals followed suit, prompting Allen's group to do the same.

When everyone slowly lifted their heads back up, one person asked the queen, "What is our next step, Your Majesty? Should I arrange for your safe passage to Nest?"

"There is no need, Gatoluuga. I will stay here in Tiamo to keep an eye on the situation."

“But, Your Majesty!”

So this man is Rohzenheim’s one and only Spirit User and the nation’s greatest military asset. Speaking of Spirit User, I remember Sophie mentioning that the walls of this city were erected by a Grand Spirit User who did so using the power of a grand earthen spirit long ago.

The man standing straight as a rod beside the throne, Grand Marshal Siguul, said chidingly, “Gatoluuga, do not trouble Her Majesty Our Queen.”

Gatoluuga protested, saying, “That was not my intention!” but still backed off.

While listening to the exchange, Allen busily made notes in his grimoire of the progression of classes that used Spirit Magic. Gatoluuga’s Talent, Spirit User, was three stars in rarity. In short, it was the same tier as Krena’s Sword Lord.

Progression of Spirit Magic Users

- One-star: Spirit Mage
- Two-star: Spirit Wizard
- Three-star: Spirit User
- Four-star: Grand Spirit User

Above Spirit User was the Grand Spirit User class that the elves still passed down legends about. It was said that this was such a rare Talent that it appeared only once every millennium. No Grand Spirit User was currently alive in Rohzenheim, but it was said that the previous one had created not only the walls of Tiamo but also numerous fortresses dotting the nation.

In order to change the heavy atmosphere, the queen asked, “Well then, what can we do now?” in an effort to bring everyone back to a more positive mindset thinking about their next step. Their country was still in a very precarious position, after all.

One general stepped forward. “We should first focus on gathering magic stones so that we can get the magic ships back up and running.”

As a superpower of the Five Continent Alliance, Rohzenheim had more than a

hundred magic ships in its service. However, ever since the start of the war, the Elder Council had chosen to prioritize the citizens' lives and had therefore ordered that all the ships be fully mobilized to transport wounded soldiers, refugees, and relief supplies. Doing so burned through the country's stock of magic stones, leaving the ships all but grounded. However, this situation could be rectified once the elves secured the massive amount of magic stones just sitting out in the open outside their gates.

It was decided that all the magic stones south of Tiamo, which roughly came to around seventy thousand total, would belong to Allen. As he was running low on both magic stones and Blessings of Heaven, he was more than thankful for the arrangement.

Suddenly, the queen turned to Allen and asked, "Lord Allen, do you have any elven elixirs remaining?" There was no doubt that the Blessings of Heaven had been the linchpin behind today's victories.

"Yes, I do." As Allen had not explained that he needed magic stones to make his recovery items, he had simply handed them out without recompense so far. However, he now made it clear that he would be asking for stones in exchange for more Blessings going forward. For a split second, Gatoluuga's face stiffened and he glared at Allen.

Seeing that the exchange between the queen and Allen was over, the general from before continued, "I suggest that we bring 100,000 of the newly recovered soldiers in Nest back to the front lines. Including those already present in the four cities at the moment, that would give us 640,000 troops in total."

As the skies above Tiamo were still occupied by flying monsters from the Demon Lord Army, it was impossible to dispatch the magic ships currently docked in the city. Conversely, if Allen was to deliver all the magic stones they harvested to Nest via Bird B, the magic ships in Nest could be mobilized to deliver the newly recovered soldiers to a location close enough to Tiamo that they can march the rest of the way on foot.

The other generals felt so moved they could not help but let out a cheer. Everyone who knew that the queen was here in Tiamo had thought that the city would fall in a matter of days—this would have meant the death of the queen,

and by extension, the end of Rohzenheim as a country. In the blink of an eye, however, all four cities along the front lines had successfully repelled the Demon Lord Army, garnered enough magic stones to get the magic ships up and running again, and would now be seeing 100,000 troops returning to bolster their numbers. Just when it had seemed like all was lost, everything turned around in an instant.

The queen expressed her thanks as representative of all the elves. “Lord Allen, I promise we will repay this debt. Please continue lending us your aid.”

“Of course, Your Majesty,” Allen bowed. “Now, about what to do next...”

One of the generals perked up. “Hm? Do you have a plan in mind, Lord Allen?” It had been Allen’s idea to pincer the monsters in the south during today’s battle. If he had more ideas, the elves were eager to hear them.

“Before I get into it, I report that the Demon Lord Army appears to be withdrawing.”

“Well, we did see them retreat...”

“What I mean to say is, *all* their forces, even the ones at the other three cities, are withdrawing.” Thanks to White Night, Bird D’s Awakened Skill, Allen had a clear grasp of the Demon Lord Army’s current movements. “As such, I think this a wonderful opportunity to chase them down.”

“Chasing the monsters down?”

The generals were aware that Allen’s group had killed almost 40,000 during their night attack the other day. That proved that Allen actually meant what he was saying and had the ability to enact it.

“Please bring the recovered troops to Tiamo as quickly as possible. When they arrive and are properly rearranged into ranks, let’s push north and start retaking cities.” There was a limit to how many a magic ship could carry, but Allen still pressed home the fact that time was of the essence here.

“So you propose that we go on the offensive!” one of the generals exclaimed.

“Yes, sir. As such, I would appreciate a list of the cities you want to prioritize. The eventual aim is to win back Fortenia. Let’s make this happen as soon as we

can.”

Hope returned to the faces of the elves. After successfully defending Tiamo, Allen’s group was ready to move on to their next battle.

* * *

The next morning, the No-life Gamers rode their Bird Bs to a location several kilometers north of Tiamo. Allen mulled over the information he had obtained from the previous night’s military meeting as the wind blew hard against his face.

According to the report from Field Marshal Lukdraal in Nest, the Empire of Giamut had messaged them through a magic tool promising to send Rohzenheim support in the form of foodstuffs and other supplies. Assuming that Rohzenheim would be unable to decline their declaration, Giamut had already dispatched a magic ship that was currently en route to Nest.

The field marshal also had further information regarding the battle situation on the Central Continent: The Demon Lord Army had already started moving and would arrive at the fortresses at Giamut’s northern border in one or two days. They numbered two million, unchanged from before, and were equally spread out across the ten fortresses directly in their path. This meant each fortress was looking at a force of around 200,000. This was just as Allen had predicted.

Supposedly, the emperor of Giamut, who had been enthroned at a young age, was touted as a wise, intelligent, and very shrewd man. And sure enough, sending Rohzenheim support at this time seemed like a highly calculated move. Allen could not help but be impressed.

The fact that Rohzenheim had sent Giamut 600,000 elven elixirs had naturally reached the emperor’s ears. He just as likely also understood the effects of those elixirs. By sending these supplies, he was taking advantage of Rohzenheim in its moment of need and making it indebted to Giamut so that he could ask for more elven elixirs in the future at a discount. What was more, when properly supplied, the Rohzenheim force would be able to fight longer, increasing the chances of the four million monsters on standby getting directed at the elves. If all went well, Giamut would be getting two birds with one stone.

Allen deeply felt the reality that, even in the midst of a world crisis, leaders were still going to prioritize the interests of their own countries over those of any others.

“What’ve you been zoning out for?” Cecil asked, interrupting Allen’s thoughts. “I can see them now.”

“Oh, really?”

The two of them were currently riding one Beast B together. The No-life Gamers had set off from Tiamo to confirm the movements of the withdrawing enemy forces in order to decide what course of action to take next. The reason Allen and Cecil were riding together was, just as before, to save on the number of Summon slots used, but there was one thing different today: they were sitting facing each other. Allen was sitting in the front, meaning his back was turned toward the direction they were heading.

Allen was sitting backward because he had taken plant pots out on the griffin’s spacious back and was using them to create Blessings of Heaven. Considering how many had been used up the day before, he had decided to use even his commute to replenish his stock.

Thanks to the Demon Lord Army retreating from all four cities, there would be no fighting today. Having lost 100,000 monsters was more than enough to affect their ability to continue their consecutive days of assault. And every moment they spent withdrawing, Allen would produce more Blessings of Heaven, tipping the scales in the elves’ favor a little at a time.

Upon being prompted by Cecil, Allen checked the vision of their Bird B, which he was Sharing with. Sure enough, the stragglers of the retreating force had come into view.

“Wait, judging by their speed, they’ll be joining up with another group tomorrow. We have to stop it.”

“Them joining up is bad?”

“Very bad. If they turn into a big group and turn back to focus on any single city, things won’t end well.”

Uh-oh, I just realized it, but this isn’t simply withdrawing, is it?

Up to this point, the Demon Lord Army's attacking force had split into four to attack four cities at the same time. However, after the great losses they suffered from the night attack the day before and yesterday's battles, they might be changing up their strategy. There was no telling yet what the weakened remnants planned on doing after they joined up, but the enemy gathering their strength was just all around bad news.

"What're we gonna do, then?"

"Harass them, of course. We're not fighting to protect anything now, so we can move however we want. I think defeat in detail makes the most sense here."

In a defensive battle, all strategies would be centered around the city, but today, the No-life Gamers could attack however they wanted. Allen used Bird F to share his plans for the day with the rest of his companions. Transmission was particularly great for situations like this because there was simply no way for those he did not specify as recipients to overhear.

The No-life Gamers closed in on the clump of monsters 100,000 strong.

"Things are picking up. How much longer are you gonna keep making those?"

"The entire day, of course. I won't be stopping."

The Demon Lord Army had already noticed the approaching Bird Bs, as they were quite large. Several monsters were now flying over, but Allen did not stop what he was doing.

"Please climb a little higher, Griff. And Cecil, get ready to use Petit Meteor."

Allen wanted to convert the magic stones harvested last night into Blessings of Heaven as soon as possible. As such, he planned to keep at it unless his ride got actually swamped by monsters. Cecil understood his intention immediately.

The Demon Lord Army was heading north, but there was a large difference in how fast those at the front and those at the rear were walking. The trolls and ogres in particular were just lumbering along at the very end. The Gamers climbed three kilometers higher to lose their pursuers, with a Dragon B summarily finishing off those that *did* follow them this high.

During this time, Cecil was concentrating in order to activate her Extra Skill.

“Drop it around there.”

Cecil nodded wordlessly, then held out a hand toward a point slightly in front of the slowest group of stragglers. “Petit Meteor!”

A giant burning hunk of rock fell from the sky. Thanks to the monsters sticking so closely together while on the move, this single attack wiped out nearly 10,000 of them in one fell swoop.

Niceeee, I’m getting so much XP. This is almost as much as what I got yesterday.

Because Allen had gone around and buffed all the soldiers in all four cities, everything they killed the day before had also given him XP. However, because that had counted as him fighting in a group of more than 253 people, the threshold for the lowest tier of XP distribution, he had only received ten percent of the XP from each kill.

Today, however, he was only with the No-life Gamers. He was therefore now receiving eighty percent XP for everything they killed.

“Thank you. Looks like you got quite a lot of them,” Allen said, passing Cecil his MP Recovery Ring. “Here, use this to top back up.” Riding the same Summon made it easy to pass things over like this.

“Thanks,” Cecil replied. When she looked down to see her handiwork, she noted, “Oh, we’ve got ourselves a following now.”

“Yep. Now they’re split up.”

And I see the monsters at the front are still pressing on regardless.

Due to Cecil aiming slightly in front of the slowest group, the 20,000 trolls and ogres that were particularly sluggish had survived her attack. Realizing that they had been cut off from the bigger group, these monsters were now chasing the Gamers. Those north of the crater from the impact, however, did not turn back.

To make it easy for the monsters to pursue them, the Gamers purposely lowered their altitude and flew slowly.

“Defeat in detail is the tactic of attacking small enemy units, right? So we’re

making the small units ourselves?”

Cecil recalled what she had learned in class and finally understood what Allen had been getting at. “Defeat in detail,” or otherwise known as “divide and conquer,” meant attacking the enemy when it was split up in smaller groups and bringing all of one’s forces to bear to finish off those smaller groups in sequence. At first, Cecil had thought that Allen was referring to the four groups retreating from the four cities as his “small units.” As it turned out, he was actually thinking of annihilating the group that got separated from the Petit Meteor she had just fired.

Allen nodded. “Exactly. A big group can always be broken up into smaller groups.”

When the rest of the monsters had pulled far away enough, the Gamers stopped in midair and looked down at the small group they had been leading on. The trolls and ogres had been so occupied with chasing the griffins in the air that they failed to realize they had walked right into a group of Insect Bs. A full day had passed since the start of yesterday’s battle, so the number of Lil Antsys had increased by another 3,000. Some had gotten killed in the fighting, so their total number was now 5,500. Naturally, every last one had been fully buffed with Fish-type Summons. As Keel and Sophie cast their own buffs, Allen called out several Dragon Bs.

“Now... This group’s still pretty big, but I’m gonna need a lot more magic stones, so let’s get to work!”

After considering the number and composition of this group of monsters and determining that his companions and Summons would be able to take it on, Allen gave the command for everyone to get into place. The trolls and ogres froze for a second when they finally realized they’d fallen for a trap, but immediately assumed battle readiness. The Lil Antsys closed the encirclement, eyeing the monsters like prey.

“Looks like you’re all ready. Okay, time to kill every last one of them!”

And so the No-life Gamers began applying the tactic of defeat in detail.

Chapter 7: An Army of One Million

During the three days that followed Tiamo's fending off the Demon Lord Army, the No-life Gamers persistently attacked the monsters that were withdrawing northward. However, the monsters still managed to regroup with the forces that had been attacking the other three cities. All four groups combined with additional reinforcements coming from Fortenia to form a singular enormous host one million strong that was now heading south straight for Tiamo. Allen's group tried everything they could to divert their path, but to no avail.

Upon returning to Tiamo, Allen immediately headed straight to the queen's audience chamber, where the generals caught him up on what had happened over the past three days. Namely, the elves had focused their efforts on collecting the magic stones and now had over one hundred thousand in stock. Of these, fifty thousand went to Allen and would eventually be converted into Blessings of Heaven.

The remaining magic stones had been waiting for Allen's return so that he could deliver them to Nest via Bird B. As he himself had said, it would take no time at all thanks to his Summon's Awakened Ability, Jet. These stones would then be used to power the dozens of magic ships currently grounded in the city.

"How long would it take to evacuate everyone, sir?" Allen asked one of the generals.

"Let me think... Tiamo alone has more than seven hundred thousand refugees. Nest will probably begin running the magic ships the second they become operational, so if we take that into account, perhaps four or five days. Why do you ask?"

A grim look came over the No-life Gamers' faces.

"I have bad news," Allen said. "The Demon Lord Army is currently marching straight for Tiamo with a million monsters. They're resting right now because it's nighttime, but they'll probably arrive in two days."

“WHAT?!” the generals all gasped as the queen leaned forward on her throne.

One mumbled in despair, “It’s going to be a repeat of the northernmost fortress...” He was clearly thinking of the fortress that had stood impregnable for more than fifty years before it was ultimately brought down by a force of three million.

Seriously, the Demon Lord Army is moving way too fast. Even when we used divide and conquer tactics, we only managed to kill around 30,000 a day since they just kept marching no matter what we did.

It was true that the scales of this war had tipped a little toward the elves now that the No-life Gamers had joined the fray—over 500,000 monsters had been wiped out over the past few days. However, there was no denying that their involvement had also been the trigger for the Demon Lord Army’s change of strategy. Furthermore, the night attack and overwhelming casualties had served as very convincing hints that Tiamo was where the queen of the elves was hiding. Even if the Army was not absolutely certain, they at least knew that the chances of her being in Tiamo were significantly higher than the other cities.

“Does this mean we’ll be fighting a million monsters?”

Arrangements for starting up the magic ships again had only just begun. There was no way for them to get all the refugees out in time. Allen asked if everyone had the resolve to fight.

“We do indeed,” the queen attested. “Our citizens have nowhere left to run, so let us all fight as one and protect them with everything we have.”

“Of course, Your Majesty!” one of the generals cried. Not a single person was afraid.

The queen slowly turned her head to look at Allen. “Would we be able to count on your continued aid, Lord Allen?”

So, there are more than 200,000 elven soldiers here, plus enough recovery items. We might be able to hunker down and fend off the Demon Lord Army for a while, but the moment the city falls spells the end of the story for the queen, and in turn, the entire nation. If we’re going to go all in, then I prefer the option with better odds.

“Of course,” Allen replied. “However, if we all plan on staying and making a stand here, then I have something in mind.”

The generals all murmured in delighted anticipation. The strategies suggested by this young boy with black hair over these past few days had led to nothing short of miracles, one after another. They awaited his next words with the full expectation that he would pull it off yet again.

“How many scouts are in this city?”

Everyone felt a bit let down that Allen was asking about the scouts when they had a force of a million to worry about, but one of the generals still answered his question. “Scouts? Around 3,000.”

“I see. And how many of them possess an Extra Skill that increases their Agility?”

“Hm? You’re not asking about those with tracking or enemy-detection abilities?”

There was a high degree of randomness when it came to Extra Skills. They were very likely to be related to one’s class, of course, but there were many different directions that could go in. For example, a scout’s job included sneaking behind enemy lines to gather intel, discovering any enemies in hiding, and tracking camps and supply lines, to name a few.

A lot of the regular skills tied to scout-like classes tended to provide Agility buffs, and they saw the most improvement in their Agility stat when leveling up. When put together, these made scouts especially fast. As such, having an Extra Skill that further buffed AGI was considered a bust in the Extra Skills lottery.

And yet, Allen was specifically asking for these “losers.”

“There are around a hundred, I believe.”

Without saying anything further, the other generals nodded, indicating that this was a good estimate.

“If that’s the case, may I have command over 2,000 of the scouts? I especially want all of those with Talents that raise their Agility stat.”

“Mm? If you desire, you may have all 3,000 of them. If we’re to be bracing

behind our walls, there will be practically nothing for them to do anyway. I'll instruct them to follow your orders."

"Thank you, General. I want to inform them of my strategy right away, then. Would you mind summoning the commanding officer now?"

"Very well. I'll fetch him," one of the generals replied. Understanding the urgency of their situation, he then headed out himself.

Allen turned back to the queen. "As soon as I finish briefing the scouting commander, we'll head out right away."

Representing everyone else in the room, she said, "Thank you, Lord Allen."

"This time, I'm thinking of using delaying tactics," Allen explained. "The enemy is set to reach Tiamo in two days, but we'll try to delay them by one more day. Please use that time to prepare."

A lot could be achieved in one day, especially when the elves knew Spirit Magic, which could be used to create things like trenches and walls very quickly. Allen also requested that the elves wipe out the monsters still remaining near Tiamo.

The queen nodded, acknowledging everything Allen said, then turned to her daughter. "Sophie."

"Yes, Your Majesty?"

"Make sure you protect Lord Allen."

Sophie's face lit up. "Of course, Your Majesty," she said, bowing. She had half expected her mother to stop her from going, so she was grateful for this roundabout way that the queen was giving her blessing to accompany Allen.

At that moment, the general who had gone off to fetch the scout commander returned, announcing, "I've brought him!"

The man who followed in after him wore decorations indicating that he was a colonel. For strategic purposes, he had been informed that the queen was here, so he was not surprised to see her. The fact that he had been summoned so suddenly did leave him quite bewildered, though. However, there was no time to let him collect himself.

Allen addressed him right off. “My sincere apologies for calling you so late. It’s a bit sudden, but I’m going to now tell you about our current situation and what I want you to do.”

Despite having no context whatsoever, the colonel listened carefully to what this black-haired boy had to say. When he was finished, however, the man was just as bewildered as before.

“What’s the point of doing that in this situation?!”

He was about to add, “Are you right in the head?!” but the queen cut him off with a firm command to “do whatever Lord Allen says.” The colonel looked around to find everyone glaring at him as if also telling him to just shut up and obey. In the first place, the scouts were often not informed of the big picture of the situation. And so, without any other choice, the colonel bowed his head.

“I understand. Order received.”

Another general suddenly suggested having Gatoluuga, the Spirit User, accompany the No-life Gamers. He argued that, with Rohzenheim’s most powerful fighter at their side, their plan would have a higher chance of success.

The problem with that, however, was that Gatoluuga had no experience fighting alongside the Gamers. He would have a much easier time—and his abilities were far more suited for—staying behind to help with Tiamo’s preparations. And so Allen politely declined the idea, and it was decided that Gatoluuga would remain in Tiamo.

The elves then quickly sprung to action. Word of the approach of the massive host was immediately sent to Nest. While Tiamo readied its refugees for evacuation, Nest rushed to get its magic ships operational and began sending its soldiers over.



After grabbing a few hours of sleep, the No-life Gamers set off from Tiamo once more. Just like the day prior, Allen was riding a Bird B with Cecil, sitting face-to-face with her so he could continue making Blessings of Heaven.

As usual, the monsters had started marching at daybreak. As the sun started climbing, the Demon Lord Army appeared along the northern horizon,

eventually covering the entire earth like a massive, squirming stain.

“There’s...a *lot* of them,” Cecil muttered, her voice slightly shaking.

“There sure are,” Allen replied, still so focused on his work that he did not even bother glancing down at the host below.

“Aren’t you scared?”

“Hmm... Nah, not really.”

To be exact, Allen was not afraid of himself dying, but he was extremely afraid of his friends dying. He was aware that he had been asking them to really put themselves out there lately, but everything had been within what he believed was everyone’s safety margins. Today’s plan, however, might actually be toeing that line.

Cecil’s face softened at Allen’s answer. “Thank you, Allen.”

“For what?”

“For telling us everything. I didn’t think you ever would.”

Starting all the way back when Allen was her manservant, Cecil had always known that there was something about him that was different from other people.

“Well, y’know...you shouldn’t thank people before a fight.” *We can do without you jinxing things, thank you very much.*

“What’s that mean?”

“Ah, it’s something from my past life.”

“Tell me more about that too sometime.”

“Sure. To do that, we gotta get through this first, though.”

Allen now took a good look at the Demon Lord Army. *Honestly, them taking the musclebrained approach of throwing bodies at us without any tactics whatsoever is literally the worst strategy they could have chosen.*

If the enemy had come in a steady trickle, then Allen’s side could have whittled down their numbers slowly. If they had remained spread out over several cities, then Allen’s side could have killed off a lot more of them. In fact,

Allen's original plan had been to slowly work his way through all the occupied settlements and fortresses and clear them one after another. Unfortunately, the Demon Lord Army must have realized this; after their losses at the siege of Tiamo, they had immediately changed their approach.

It's clear that one or two million dying makes no difference at all for the Demon Lord Army. The only thing they care about is wiping Rohzenheim off the map.

The tactic of launching an assault with overwhelming numbers was, due to its simplicity, extremely hard to deal with. As Allen continued monitoring the monsters, a black mass could be seen approaching from the south. It looked tiny compared to the Demon Lord Army, but this group was composed of around 10,000 individuals.

"Looks like the Lil Antsys have arrived," Cecil commented.

"Yep. Time to get started, then," Allen replied.

Right behind the Lil Antsys were the thirty original Antsys. All of them had marched through the night to arrive here at this time. They continued charging straight at the Demon Lord Army, their speed showing no signs of slowing.

Okay, so I've got thirty Insect Bs out right now and seventeen slots remaining.

The pages of Allen's grimoire flipped furiously as he took stock of the situation with his Summons. He had already done everything he could to maximize the number of slots he could use while fighting. Of the sixteen Summons that had been sent to fight on the Central Continent, eight had already been killed. The remaining eight were still there, supporting Giamut's forces from the shadows.

"Cecil, aim for that group at the very front, if you please." *Since the fastest ones are in the lead. We gotta slow them down as much as possible.*

A heat haze sprang up around Cecil's body, then she thrust out both her hands. "Petit Meteor!"

A red-hot boulder enveloped in flames slammed into the earth, incinerating the cluster of monsters at the head of the procession. However, it was not long before more monsters appeared beyond, breaking through the cloud of dust as they trampled the hellish landscape created by the impact. The flames that still

blazed on the ground were quickly stamped out, having made no impact whatsoever on the direction that the Army was heading in.

“Okay, we’re going down to fight in person!”

“All right!”

The Bird Bs descended, taking up position behind the Insect Bs. They never quite landed, though, opting instead to fly at extremely low altitude so they could pull up at a moment’s notice.

“Dora, Cerby, Belly, Finny, Genbu—come out!”

Ten Dragon Bs, four Beast Bs, and one each of every Fish-type Summon appeared. This left Allen with literally zero free slots—the way he saw it, this was the best composition he could bring out in light of the current situation.

All the Summons aside from the Fish-type ones immediately charged into the Demon Lord Army as if diving into the mouth of an unstoppable flood.

Come at us seriously! We’ll destroy everything you’ve got!

Allen had come to this world because he was sick of games with the difficulty level dialed all the way down. The scene before his eyes now, however, reminded him of the days he spent annihilating the enemies that filled his screen. His head raced with ideas to kill as many monsters as possible as he suppressed the sense of euphoria coursing through his body. After all, if they failed to kill enough monsters here, the queen and residents in Tiamo would be the ones getting killed instead.

And so the Lil Antsys dived right in, the numbers they had accumulated over several days slowly but surely getting whittled down. Even when they were attacked, they showed no hesitation at all. Similarly, Dogora and Krena brandished their weapons fiercely, killing every single monster within reach.

“Krena, Dogora, make sure you use the Lil Antsys as walls to take the damage for you!”

“Yep, I know!”

“Got it!”

The two vanguard fighters fell back as Allen instructed and adopted positions

behind the giant insects' carapace. At the same time, Volmaar, Cecil, and the Dragon Bs took care of the flying enemies. Even so, the million-strong host continued its relentless march, paying no attention whatsoever to the Gamers.

As I thought, they really are ignoring us.

"Forget about the monsters heading to Tiamo for now and focus solely on killing the monsters before you! We'll move to the front again a little later!"

"Are y'all running from us?! *Huh?! I'll kill every last one of you!*" Dogora howled at the monsters turning their backs on the Gamers to continue heading toward Tiamo.

"Calm down!" Allen shouted before his friend could break formation to charge the other way. "Don't get swallowed by the heat of battle!"

It was clear that the Demon Lord Army had made a conscious choice to pay the No-life Gamers no mind at all. After killing the monsters that they had been engaged with, Allen's group flew back to the front again to repeat the process, desperately trying to thin out the fastest monsters so as to slow the Army's approach toward Tiamo.

* * *

Three days had passed since Allen and his companions left Tiamo. The sun hung high in the sky around the ten o'clock position. There was still no sign of the enemy host that was supposed to have arrived the day before. The No-life Gamers' delay tactics had paid off.

During the preceding three days, the magic ships had been running at full capacity. Thanks to this, the soldiers stationed in Tiamo now numbered 300,000. The four walls of the city—each five kilometers in length—were fully manned.

Three more walls had been hastily erected to the north of the city, wider in width than the city's. These makeshift ramparts reached five meters high but did not provide very sturdy footing, being made of rocks stacked so haphazardly that the structures looked like tetrapod coastal defenses. These walls, too, were fully manned, with everyone holding their Spirit Magic and bows at the ready and looking very tense.

Before long, smoke went up in the north—a company of the scouts temporarily under Allen’s command had been ordered to their usual duty of keeping lookout, and they had just used their Signal Fire skills. The Demon Lord Army was here.

“The time has come! Men, to positions! Follow the strategy! Third wall, ready your attacks!”

“SIR, YES, SIR!”

Slowly but surely, a rumbling filled the air and the ground began to quake, making the stones clatter against each other. The idyllic scenery of Rohzenheim was soon trampled beneath the feet of the countless monsters.

“THEY’RE HERE! PROTECT HER MAJESTY!”

“RAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

Arrows rained down on the monsters, but they continued their charge forward. When the front line crashed against the northernmost wall, the structure shook violently and crumbled in some places. Even though each stone was more than a meter long, the Rank B monsters still proceeded to dismantle the wall. The elves frantically retaliated with arrows and Spirit Magic, but they were nowhere close to killing the monsters fast enough.

“Retreat! Men, retreat!”

Deciding that this wall would not last any longer, the general in charge gave the order to fall back. The troops returned to the city and joined those already on the walls who were making whatever preparations needed to continue fighting.

Eventually, the second northernmost wall fell as well. These structures had been erected using every last drop of MP the elves possessed, and now those on the city walls could do nothing but bite their nails and look on as everything got torn down. Was this the end of Rohzenheim? Was there no more hope? Despair spread throughout the ranks as they witnessed the overwhelming power of sheer numbers.

When the fighting reached the final makeshift wall, a massive griffin flew down and stopped before the commanding general. On its back was a black-

haired teenage boy, who said, “Looks like they’ve already started. Maybe staying behind to finish off that last group was a bit too greedy of us.”

“The monsters haven’t actually reached the city yet, though,” the girl riding beside him replied.

Allen turned to quickly update the generals stationed between the city walls and the makeshift wall. “We’ll be joining the fight now. We’ve already killed 400,000, so there are only 600,000 more to kill and we win this. Our aim is to stop the monsters from making any more headway. Please provide cover fire.”

“I...see. However—” The general was about to say something, but Allen was already gone.

Okay, I have a total of fifty available card slots right now and only 30,000 Rank B magic stones left. I guess this will have to do.

Even though Allen’s stock had ballooned up to 130,000 stones after the first siege of Tiamo, it was now back down to only 30,000 after using them for all the Summons and Blessings of Heaven he had made.

“Antsys, Doras, Cerbys, Belly, Finny, Genbu, Hawkins! Come out!”

Twenty Insect Bs, twenty-two Dragon Bs, four Beast Bs, one each of the Fish-type Summons, and one Bird E appeared all at once. This was the best way Allen could think of to use all fifty slots right now. Immediately, the Insect Bs used Spawn and began arranging their Lil Antsys’ formations.

While all this was going on, the monsters finally broke through the final rock rampart and started marching on the city walls. The elves who had been manning that last wall rushed back into the city to bolster the forces on the northern wall.

Allen was not sure whether the frenzied monsters could even understand human language, but he still addressed the monsters. “You’re hungry, right? Since your side apparently doesn’t know how to set up a supply train. Oh wait, that can’t be right. Ah, so your superiors *chose* not to set one up...”

These monsters had barely had any food at all for at least three consecutive days and nights. The lack of supply lines meant these monsters were being treated as disposable fodder. It was clear just how little they were worth in

their superiors' eyes.

“THEY’RE HERE! ARCHERS, SPIRIT MAGIC USERS, FIIIIIRE!!!”

“RAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

The moment the Demon Lord Army burst through the last makeshift wall, the elves along the top of Tiamo’s north wall began unleashing their attacks. However, this did nothing to stop the monsters’ charge, and they continued closing in on the city wall. It was not long before they were within a hundred meters.

Here’s to hoping my backup arrives in time!

Upon seeing the last of the soldiers evacuate safely from the final wall, Allen shouted, “Doras, use Fire Breath!”

In response, the twenty-two Dragon Bs began reducing swathes of monsters to ash.

“Cecil, can you land a Petit Meteor all the way north of the third wall? Any closer and the city itself might get damaged. Our goal is to hold the monsters back until the last elf makes it through the city gate.”

“You got it. Petit Meteor!”

Far off in the distance, a gigantic, flaming boulder came crashing down. A heavy boom and the screams of monsters filled the air, but more soon took the places of their fallen monsters-in-arms.

Allen’s force—which included the No-life Gamers, Dragon Bs, Insect Bs, and Lil Antsys—did whatever it could to hamper the Demon Lord Army’s advance. Their current formation was doing a good job protecting Tiamo’s northern wall, but they could not cover enough area lengthwise, meaning there were monsters getting past on their left and right. The sole silver lining was that Allen had at least had the foresight to tell the elves to station more men on the east and west walls.

I’ve got to use more Doras, or the east and west walls will fall first.

The rapidly evolving situation forced Allen to change up his strategy on the fly. His original idea was to make up for the difference in numbers with Lil

Antsys, but at the end of the day, they only had the stats of a Rank B monster, so it took them much too long to kill the enemy, which were evenly matched at Rank B. They were great for situations where the Gamers could take their time and slowly work through an enemy force, but not so much under these particular circumstances.

Through the eyes of the Bird E Allen was monitoring the entire battlefield with, he noticed the Demon Lord Army making contact with the eastern and western ends of the north wall and the elves putting up a desperate resistance.

Oh! The Spirit User's also fighting!

Gatoluuga was standing on the eastern end of the north wall, fighting with the help of what looked like a floating stuffed doll and a fairy with exquisite wings. The pace at which he was finishing off monsters more than validated his title as Rohzenheim's strongest fighter.

Oh hey, it's my first time seeing a spirit— Or not. Right, Rohzen's a spirit too. Okay, focus. Ugh, I'm burning through my magic stones so quickly. For now, I should probably replace a few Antsys with Doras.

Each Dragon B required twenty-nine Rank B magic stones to make. What's more, the fewer Insect Bs—and by extension, the fewer Lil Antsys—there were, the more attacks that would be redirected to the Dragon Bs. And every time a Dragon B got done in, Allen had to use more magic stones to replace it. However, what was most important now was the pace at which they were killing the enemy, so he decided to place his bets on Dragon B, which could use its Ability with no limitations.

As expected, the monsters had learned to focus on the dragons, and Allen needed to continuously make more. However, right before each one died, Allen made sure that it used its Awakened Ability first. To go down without ever using Hellfire of Fury would have been an enormous waste.

The more Allen expended stones, the more monsters died. However, the fact that the Dragon Bs were dying so quickly also spoke volumes about just how powerful these enemies were.

I have to take my hat off to them. At this pace, I'm gonna run out of magic stones in no time.

“Krena and Dogora, focus on the Rank A monsters! Cecil, Volmaar, Doras, Antsys—the Rank Bs are yours!”

“Sure thing! We got this!” Krena’s cheerful answer gave Allen a modicum of relief.

The legion of Rank B monsters was steadily being culled by Cecil’s magic and Volmaar’s arrows, with the Doras and Antsys providing support however they could. After the Summons exhausted the Rank A monsters, Krena and Dogora then summarily finished them off.

My magic stones won’t last me another thirty minutes, let alone an hour. Damn, and I thought my plan would work.

Just as Allen’s stock plunged below 5,000, the Bird E in the sky noticed an elf running toward Tiamo parallel to the monsters, carrying a large sack over his shoulder. His entire body was enveloped in a heat haze, indicating that he was using his Extra Skill.

OH! THEY’RE HEEEEERE!

The elf had asked himself why he was doing this. Rohzenheim was in crisis right now, and he could not understand how his orders contributed to the battle in any way. As a scout, he would not have even minded if he were told to infiltrate one of the towns taken by the Demon Lord Army to gather intel. And if it led to protecting the life of his queen, he would even give up his own life without complaint. That said, his superiors’ orders were absolute. Despite feeling qualms about what he was doing, he had indeed filled a bag to the brim as he had been told and ran all the way back to Tiamo.

Despair washed over him as he came up on the remnants of the third wall and saw how it was now swamped with monsters. Then he noticed that the city wall beyond was as yet unbreached. After heaving a sigh of relief, the scout changed course, deciding to circle around to the east gate. The main gate was shut tight, so he dashed through the small door at the side for gatekeepers. He continued running through the city at top speed, streaking down streets—normally filled with the hustle and bustle of life but now entirely deserted—as he made his way north. When he reached the north gate, he found the colonel in command of all the scouts waiting for him.

Without stopping to catch his breath, the soldier saluted his superior and shouted, "I've brought the magic stones!"

"Well done!" the colonel replied. "Now go to Lord Allen and ask for his instructions!"

"Sir, yes, sir!"

During this exchange, the other elves were still desperately fending off the monsters from the walls. Healers were busily running to and fro casting their spells, Spirit Magic casters were firing off spells one after another, and the archers never let their hands rest as they loosed arrows like there was no tomorrow.

Despite knowing there was a horde of monsters beyond, the scout did not hesitate when heading out of the north gate through the side door.

Phew, they actually made it. I was this close to literally running out of magic stones. Like, I only have about a thousand left! Yes, come here, this way!

Allen was using his Summons to maintain a safe area immediately outside the gate. When the scout stepped through, he could immediately see where Allen was.

"Thank you for making it! Please throw all the magic stones into this hole!"

Right in front of Allen was a square hole in the ground measuring roughly a meter each side and around a meter deep.

"I'm sorry?"

"Hurry, please!"

"Yes, sir!"

Despite not understanding what he was doing, the elven scout did as he was told and began emptying his bag into the hole.

"Do you know how many you were carrying, by the way?"

"Around 5,000, sir."

"You've been an enormous help."

"I...see."

The man was worried about the magic stones overflowing from the hole, but for some reason, they disappeared practically as soon as they went in. It was almost as if the hole did not actually have a bottom.

Heh heh heh, and this is how the elves will be able to help restock my magic stones even though they can't see my grimoire.

This hole had been dug by Beast F, a Summon that looked like a mole. Allen's grimoire lay at the bottom of this hole, opened up to the Storage page. He had Moley dig this hole because the elves would not be able to tell where his grimoire was otherwise.

Now I can continue fighting. Oh, here come more scouts! Yes, yes! Come to me!

Allen gleefully checked Bird E's vision and spotted ten more elves with large sacks running over. Thanks to their Extra Skills, they approached with unbelievable speed and were through the north gate in no time at all.

"We've brought the stones!" they cried, then followed Allen's instructions to empty their sacks into the hole in the ground. The sight of the magic stones seemingly being swallowed up did raise questions in their minds, but they continued carrying out their duties in silence.

"Thank you so very much," Allen said, commending these men who had risked life and limb for this strategy from the bottom of his heart.

Scouts often received very unreasonable orders; for example, they were the ones who had confirmed the total number in the force invading Rohzenheim as well as made out the direction they were heading. This was why it was often said that they were usually the first to die on the battlefield. When Allen learned all this at the Academy, he found himself understanding why Dagrah, the former scout whom he had fought during Cecil's kidnapping, had come to hate the world and the nobles who served as his superiors and why he had decided to degrade himself by becoming an assassin.

In any case, I'm now back to over 50,000 Rank B magic stones, and there's still more on the way.

It was not long after that the second group of scouts arrived. This time, there

were more than thirty of them.

The tactic used by the Demon Lord Army this time was very simple: they would overwhelm the city where the queen was believed to be located with sheer numbers. That was it.

This was why Allen decided to keep things simple too. First, he and his party would spend three days and nights killing as many monsters as they could. When the Demon Lord Army passed them, they would then just circle back to the front again. As a result, the course taken by the enemy host was littered with the corpses of the 400,000 monsters killed by the No-life Gamers. It was a literal trail of death that stretched all the way to the north.

The task of the 3,000 scouts was to harvest the magic stones from these corpses. Then the one hundred with Extra Skills that further increased their Agility stat would gather up the stones and carry them over.

In short, Allen had asked to borrow troops to replenish his stock of magic stones.

Sure enough, there was now a steady stream of elves running to Tiamo, bringing with them bags and bags of magic stones. One by one, all one hundred of them emptied their bags into the hole in an unending stream.

I've more than 300,000 stones now. All right, time to get started.

Allen deleted all the Dragon B cards he had out at the moment to create new ones, then Summoned all twenty in one go.

"Doras, we're ready. It's time to go ham on Hellfire of Fury!"

"We've been waiting, Master!"

The dragons all flashed smug grins, then opened their massive jaws as if sucking in the air. Then a light several times more luminous than their Abilities gathered in their mouths before bursting forward the next instant in roaring billows of fire that turned almost a thousand monsters before them to mere ash. Their simultaneous breath attacks did not burn the enemy so much as they simply erased them.

Then Allen deleted the Dragon B cards and used Quick Summoning to call

forth fresh Doras once again. Each Dragon B could only use its Awakened Ability once per day. This was why Allen was going to all this trouble, but this process burned through magic stones at an incredible rate. Now, however, Allen had more than enough to sustain this strategy.

“Let’s keep this up! Hellfire of Fury, FIIIIIRE!”

“You got it, Master!”

Allen was consciously managing how many magic stones he was using based on the situation. During the first siege of Tiamo, his stock had gone down to around 1,000, so he had gone with the tactic of using Insect Bs to trap the enemy in a pincer attack. When delaying the force of a million, he had chosen to use more Dragon Bs in order to increase the pace at which his group was killing the monsters, and this had cost him around 20,000 magic stones per day.

Now, however, he could afford to go all out. Each time he Summoned a fresh batch of Dragon Bs, he spent 580 magic stones, which added up to around 50,000 per hour.

For the first time since the start of this battle, the elven side began pushing back the Demon Lord Army. The pace at which they were killing the monsters had finally exceeded the pace at which the monsters were rushing forward to attack.

Still perched on his Bird B, Allen slowly pushed forward, inviting monsters to enter the range of the Dragon Bs’ Awakened Ability. After a while, he finally retook the third stone wall. Soon enough, not a single monster was left standing north of Tiamo.

Allen called out to his companions, “There’s still about 100,000 that passed us on the sides. We’re circling around to the west now!”

“That’s right, this ain’t over just yet!” Dogora shouted back. His morale had been high throughout this entire fight.

The reason Allen chose to go to the west was because Spirit User Gatoluuga was on the eastern edge. He figured that the west side needed their help more.

“Th-They’re not human...” murmured one of the soldiers who had watched the No-life Gamers fight from atop the city walls. Even though he ought to have

felt relieved now that the monsters were all dead, he found himself trembling instead. He had just witnessed a power beyond mortal understanding raze the Demon Lord Army to nothing in the blink of an eye. It had been a literal massacre.

It was not long after that the bells of Tiamo began to toll in triumph. The city had defeated an army of one million.

Chapter 8: Strategy Meeting (Part 2)

All in all, Allen had expended around 200,000 Rank B magic stones in the siege battle. Of the one million monsters that had marched on Tiamo, the No-Life Gamers had killed 400,000 over three days through their efforts to delay the Army, then an additional 400,000 on the day of battle. The remaining 200,000 had fled Tiamo and were now scattered throughout the land, entirely drained of motivation to fight and reduced to nothing more than mere beasts. It was no exaggeration to say that the second siege of Tiamo had ended once more in a resounding victory for the elves.

The feat was so shocking that it took some time for the generals just to come to terms with what they had heard in Allen's report. Of course, this was extremely felicitous news that would raise the entire nation's morale, and so it was promptly proclaimed throughout Tiamo and transmitted to Nest and the other cities through Allen's Summons.

Even after night had fallen, cries of "Long live the Sovereign of Spirits!" and "Long live Her Majesty!" rang out across town. Just as before, Allen's name and involvement was being kept under wraps, so all credit went to the Sovereign of Spirits for his miracle and to the soldiers who had put their lives on the line for the sake of their queen. Minstrels strummed their lyres as the elves danced and downed wine from wooden cups. For the first time in a long while, a semblance of normalcy had returned to the city.

In sharp contrast with the festivities outside, however, tension hung heavy in the air inside the queen's audience chamber. The No-life Gamers, who were here to report on the results of the day's battle and to discuss the next step, found themselves facing a very uneasy room.

Some of the generals were muttering among themselves.

"Th-They're back..."

"Don't be afraid. They're on our side."

“I kn-know that. But you weren’t on the walls. You didn’t see it with your own eyes. Their power doesn’t belong in the hands of an ordinary person.”

After a nice bath and a delicious meal, I can’t help but feel sleepy. Ah, the Sovereign of Spirit’s fast asleep as always. He’s even all splayed out with his belly wide open.

The flying squirrel was sleeping in the lap of the elven queen, looking as defenseless as a domesticated pet. Allen had done a double take before he remembered that this animal was the Sovereign of Spirits.

“You have done well yet again. On behalf of all the elves, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Lord Allen.”

“Your words honor me, Your Majesty. Unfortunately, due to the urgency of the situation, I was unable to think of a more suitable strategy. I am relieved that we managed to protect Tiamo regardless.”

Seriously, it was super touch and go at times. Every part of the resistance effort had been stretched to the absolute limit. If the Demon Lord Army had attacked with a force of two million, we would have been done for. Thank god they decided to prioritize speed and didn’t build up their numbers any further. They thought one million would be enough, and they paid for that mistake in judgment.

Allen continued, “Of course, we won only because everyone worked together.”

Of the one million monsters, 800,000 had been killed by the Gamers. However, Allen fully understood that the elven scouts’ support and the teamwork of those manning the northern wall contributed in no small part to this victory.

On another note, I’m now Lvl. 63 thanks to the battle, but Deputize is still sealed.

Allen had been earning XP practically nonstop ever since he had arrived on the Rohzenheim continent, with the amount being incomparably higher than from dungeon delving in Academy City to boot. He had gained eight levels since his fight with Helmios at the tournament, back when he had been only Lvl. 55.

Even so, the skill Deputize was still marked as “sealed” on his Status page in his grimoire.

“Now, what are you thinking of doing next, Lord Allen?” Grand Marshal Siguul asked from his position next to the queen.

The way Allen saw it, Rohzenheim was the elves’ country. As such, they should make their own decisions. However, there was no way to avoid answering a direct question.

“Before that, please allow me to first lay out our current situation. After today, we have officially killed more than half of the Demon Lord Army’s numbers.”

“That is so. The reports from our men did mention there are only 1,570,000 of them left now.”

“However, I highly doubt the Demon Lord Army will just back down after this. Rather, they’ll very likely direct their reserves our way and come up with a new tactic.”

The speed at which the Demon Lord Army had retreated from their first loss, regrouped, and launched a new attack remained fresh in Allen’s mind. If he had not dogged the retreating force himself as they headed north, he would have been caught completely unawares by how quickly they immediately turned back.

“What shall we do, then?” the queen asked.

Everyone else understood what Allen was capable of and also hung on to his next words.

“Our top priority should be to secure a position that can withstand even greater numbers than what we faced this time.”

Grand Marshal Siguul immediately caught on. “Are you referring to Castle Lapolka?”

“Yes, sir,” Allen nodded.

The elven capital, Fortenia, was surrounded by a massive mountain range with peaks that towered far above those in Allen’s previous world. And close by,

nestled between summits so high that the common description “natural fortifications” was an understatement, stood multiple castles famous worldwide for never having fallen until the arrival of the Demon Lord Army.

One such castle, located ten days away from Tiamo by horseback, was Castle Lapolka. This was the target that Allen had set his sights on next.

“It is true that we would need a castle to withstand such a great host,” Siguul agreed thoughtfully. “However, all four major cities as well as other smaller settlements along the road to Lapolka are currently in the demons’ hands. Our reports indicate that there are tens of thousands of monsters still stationed within each city. Should we not take care of them first?”

“That’s a fair point. It’s true that 400,000 of the one million that attacked today had been siphoned from various occupied settlements, making those places undermanned. However, we currently do not have the time or resources to spend on retaking settlements not crucial to the war effort.”

Attention directed toward other cities would be attention that could have been focused on Lapolka. If even one of the four million reserve forces was added to the original attacking troops and they all came knocking before the elves could recapture Lapolka, then things would truly be over for Rohzenheim.

Grand Marshal Siguul mulled over Allen’s words. After a while, he looked up, his eyes shining with the awareness that he was making a choice that would decide the future of the country.

“You are right—it is time to attack and retake Castle Lapolka with all we have. We will gather all the soldiers on standby in Nest and the other cities to form an attacking force of 300,000.”

Wow, half of all their forces. That’s a lot. He really is going all in. “Thank you very much, Grand Marshal. How long would the process take?”

“With all the magic ships flying at max capacity, the force would be ready to begin its march from Tiamo in six—no, in five days.”

Five days before they set off, then about another ten days to reach Lapolka. So, fifteen total. Wait, no, they’ll definitely be attacked by monsters along the way, so it’ll take even longer. Looks like time is our biggest enemy right now.

Maneuvering armies took time. Even if they ignored all the other cities along the way, the elves would still need half a month to get to Lapolka.

Allen began racking his brains for ideas to shorten that time while replying, “Understood. In that time, my party and I will hunt down the monsters still near Tiamo. I’ll also think of a way to capture Castle Lapolka.”

The 200,000 monsters that had fled the second siege battle of Tiamo were now in small clusters scattered around the vicinity. Part of Allen worried about them bumping into the elven army and wasting their time, but a bigger part of him was thinking how convenient it was that the monsters were now in small units that were much easier to annihilate and harvest magic stones from.

Would it make sense to say that we’ll be killing two monsters with one stone? Hm...nah, it doesn’t work that way.

Distribution of the Magic Stones from the 800,000 Monster Casualties

- 400,000 went to Allen (of which 200,000 were expended during the siege itself)
- 200,000 went to Rohzenheim (of which 100,000 were used to power magic ships and 100,000 were exchanged for Blessings of Heaven)
- 200,000 were disintegrated by the Dragon Bs’ breath attacks

Allen figured that if he were to kill the fleeing monsters, he would make the elven army’s march that much smoother *and* add to his stock of magic stones. It was agreed that he would get to keep all the Rank A magic stones.

The boy turned to the Spirit B in the room and directed a message to her without speaking out loud. *Ellie, I want three of you to infiltrate Castle Lapolka ahead of the main force and gather intel on the inside.*

The Summon nodded in understanding, then slipped out through the wall behind her.

Allen was already moving to prepare for the next fight.

* * *

The day after the second siege of Tiamo found the No-life Gamers ten kilometers to the north of Tiamo.

“You’ve already made a lot. You still need more?”

“This time, we’re the ones going on the attack, so we’ll probably need a lot more than before.”

Allen was, once again, making Blessings of Heaven on the back of a Bird B while sitting face-to-face with Cecil. He was continuously calling forth what looked like peaches with hands and legs, then making them use their Awakened Skill on top of a planter he was holding. The next moment, the Summons turned into meter-tall trees that then quickly bore fruit. It was Cecil’s job to gather those fruits when they tumbled into the pot and throw them into Storage.

Rohzenheim had gained 200,000 magic stones yesterday, half of which Allen now needed to convert into 20,000 Blessings of Heaven. The elves had been fighting defensively all this time, relying on their tall walls and fortifications. Going forward, however, they would have to seize the future of their country with their own hands, and doing so would increase the risk of dying to much higher than before. Blessings of Heaven would be critical to that process, thanks to their ability both to bring troops on the verge of death back to full health and to restore soldiers’ MP so they could maintain their damage output.

“You really haven’t changed at all,” Cecil noted.

“What do you mean?”

“Back when you let go of your mithril mining rights, you didn’t ask for anything in return then either.”

Back when Cecil’s family, House Granvelle, had been backed into a tight corner by a scheme arranged by their rival, House Cernel, Allen had relinquished his rights to a mithril mine he had personally discovered. While it might have seemed like Allen was always up to no good, he was most certainly very choosy about whom he demanded payment from.

At the end of that incident, the only reward Allen received was the official title of “guest of House Granvelle.” As someone who fully grasped her family’s financial situation, Cecil knew it was the absolute best that they had to offer, but it definitely did not seem like much in light of what he *could* have demanded.

“Well, there’s no point shaking sleeves you don’t have, right? Now *that* would be a waste of time and effort,” Allen replied.

“Is that a saying?”

Allen explained how this idiom from Japan meant that one cannot spend what one does not have, to which Cecil nodded in understanding.

Rohzenheim was currently an extremely destitute country. Seventy percent of its land had fallen to the Demon Lord Army, and many of its cities had been put to the torch. It was going to need many long years to restore the country to its former prosperity.

Giamut had realized this and promptly sent over foodstuffs and other supplies. By doing so, Rohzenheim would then owe them a deep debt of gratitude, one that Giamut could leverage when negotiating lower prices for the otherwise very expensive elven healing squads as well as to gain access to the previously unobtainable elven elixirs. This had been discussed at the strategy meetings held in Rohzenheim over the past few days. Since he understood the situation, Allen was gifting the Blessings of Heaven without asking for anything in return.

“Oh! A group of them’s come into view. There’s about 30,000 there, I’d say?”

The three Ellies have been flying since last night, so they should be arriving soon too. In the meantime, I’ll focus on raising my own level.

The Deputize skill was still sealed even though Allen was now Lvl. 63. He had no idea how high his level had to be to gain access to it, but it was not like leveling too much would be a problem. He decided to focus his attention on killing as many monsters as possible.

“Lady Cecil, may I request you open with the starting shot?”

“Indeed, you may.”

After having a little bit of fun playacting, Cecil stood up on Bird B's back. She then cast her Extra Skill, Petit Meteor, signaling the start of the party's hunt for the remnants of the Demon Lord Army.

* * *

Much farther north of the Gamers was a different group composed of three Spirit Bs and one each of Birds F, E, and D. They were still pushing north at the moment just as Allen had ordered them to.

"It's come into view," Ellie murmured.

The squad had just discovered a fortified city built into the side of a mountain. It was missing many of the functions found in normal cities, but it had more than enough space to house 300,000 elves.

This was indeed Castle Lapolka. Allen examined it closely through Sharing.

It isn't gonna be easy taking this place down. But once we capture it, we'll have a straight line to Fortenia.

A carriage setting off from Lapolka would be able to reach the fallen capital in five days.

Distance from Nest, the Southernmost City, to the Rest of Rohzenheim By Carriage

- 30 days: Tiamo
- 40 days: Castle Lapolka
- 45 days: Fortenia
- 110 days: northernmost fortress

"This continent's actually pretty big, huh?"

Allen had been told that Rohzenheim was an island country on the smallest of the five continents in this world, but its size was still nothing to scoff at. By his estimates, its surface area was slightly more than Australia was back in his old world. Considering how the Central Continent was supposedly three times larger than Rohzenheim, Allen shuddered to imagine how much trouble

Helmios had protecting the northern battlefront.

Allen continued watching as the Spirit Bs discovered the castle gate. It was guarded by two Rank A monsters more than ten meters tall.

Ah, I recognize these armor-type monsters. They showed up every once in a while as Rank A dungeon bosses. They're called great warriors, right?

Several of the eyeball-bats that had been surveilling Tiamo when Allen first arrived were now keeping a lookout in the skies above the castle town. He had never encountered them before in a dungeon, so it was likely they were monsters unique to the Demon Lord Army.

Thinking quickly, Allen told his Summons, *Don't go in from the main gate. And you might get spotted if you stay in the sky, so first land, then find a good place and just slip in.*

"Your will is my command," Ellie replied in a small voice only audible to Allen, then landed behind a mountain out of view of the bats. Because he had heard Lapolka was massive, Allen had sent three Spirit Bs so they could split up to cover more ground.

I see, so it's packed with monsters inside the fortress walls.

Eventually, all three Spirit Bs had successfully slipped in through the walls without raising any alarms. The bird-type Summons remained perched in a tree outside to maintain their surveillance.

* * *

The first thing the Ellies saw was monsters strutting about the fortress like they owned the place.

Many elves had lost their lives during the Demon Lord Army's sweep south as they overran fortresses and settlements along the way until they even overtook Fortenia, the capital. The soldiers who manned Lapolka had figured that they would not be able to count on reinforcements even if they were to barricade themselves inside the fortress, so they had hastily abandoned the place and retreated to Tiamo.

And thanks to that decision, the place still functions as a perfectly adequate

fortress. I see signs of battle here and there, but they're mostly minor.

As the Spirit Bs continued wandering around, one suddenly met the gaze of a skeleton holding a sword. She gave it a brief smile and walked past it, but it did not attack her. It apparently did not perceive her as an enemy.

Phew. I thought it'd work, but it's still a relief getting confirmation. My heart skipped a beat when Ellie met its eyes back there.

Back when Allen had learned about Rohzenheim's plight at the Academy, he already figured he would eventually have to retake the settlements that had already been lost. Such operations went much smoother if there was a way to gather intel on the target location, and there was no better Summon for this role than Spirit B. This was why Allen had used Ellie only for communication purposes so far and had never revealed her in battle. All this effort was a ploy to keep her existence hidden from the enemy for as long as possible.

Sure enough, the monsters, who knew nothing about the Spirit Bs, saw them as allies just now. As long as the Summons did nothing to provoke the monsters, they had free access to the entire compound.

Good, that's good. All of you, head for the biggest building. The leader should be there.

"Your will is our command, Master." The three Spirit Bs obediently headed to the center of the fortress.

I don't really see any large monsters. Makes sense, as this place was built to scale for the elves. It's mostly monsters like skeletons all around. Conveniently enough, that makes the Ellies fit in even better.

Now that they knew they would not be attacked, the Summons proceeded with surer steps. As expected, the biggest monsters they passed were only twice the size of humans at most; gigantic monsters such as dragons were nowhere to be seen. This meant that there were mainly weapon-wielding skeletons and empty robes floating in midair about.

After checking out the city that was protected by tall, sturdy walls for a while, the three Spirit Bs finally reached the building where the boss seemed most likely to be staying. Seeing that the entrance was guarded, Allen ordered one

Spirit B to walk inside and the other two search for ways for the elves to infiltrate this fortress. The monsters on guard shot Ellie a glance as she unflinchingly walked past them but they returned to looking straight ahead right away.

Okay, Ellie, first head to the kitchen.

“Your will is my command.”

Ellie wandered the first floor a while, but then quickly found the kitchen on the second. When she walked into it—her head held high so as to not arouse suspicion—a pig on two legs wearing a chef’s hat and apron came out and yelled at her.

“What’s the matter?! Dinner is still a while off, *oink!*” he roared, stunning the Summon a little.

Allen instructed her, in between hunting a group of deserter monsters and making more Blessings of Heaven, to act timid and claim she had been ordered to bring tea.

As ordered, the Spirit B hesitantly said out loud, “Um, I was told to bring tea...”

“What? To grumpy old Lord Glaster, *oink?*”

Is Glaster the name of the boss of this fortress? Or is it the one leading all the monsters currently in Rohzenheim?

Allen told Ellie to nod several times. When he saw that, the pig-faced chef snorted in a huff. Apparently Glaster was in a bad mood at the moment.

“I just made food for him, *oink!* No idea who got the funny idea to send him tea, but they should’ve come ask for it themselves, *oink!*”

Gah, all the “oinks” that he’s adding to the end of his sentences are so distracting I can’t focus on what he’s saying.

“C-Could I trouble you to make it anyway?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’ll do it, just gimme a sec, *oink.* By the way, don’t think I’ve seen you before, *oink.* You new here, *oink?* You sure picked the short straw being assigned to serve Lord Glaster, *oink.*”

Ellie's acting seemed to have paid off, seeing how the pig-faced chef gave her a few words of sympathy while throwing together a tray with three cups, a teapot, and some snacks. Thanks to him jumping to conclusions, Ellie was going to get access to the big boss here, Glaster, much easier than Allen had thought.

This confirms it: the monsters can't tell the difference between themselves and my Summons. After my Appraisal Ceremony when I was five, Elmea did say that the Summoner class still had bugs to work out.

Allen had given some thought as to how monsters differentiated allies from enemies. In this world, monsters did not hesitate to attack other monsters. He had personally witnessed orcs attacking great boars back in Granvelle. Similarly, during the night attack on the forces besieging Tiamo, he had seen many monsters finish off nearly dead allies and feed on their corpses. Clearly, there was nothing in place forcing monsters to only attack non-monsters.

The reason why the Demon Lord Army was composed of only Rank B and higher monsters was, according to academia, because those in Rank C and below were not strong enough to pose a significant threat to well-trained soldiers. However, Allen knew that a Rank C monster could still easily end the life of a Talentless soldier, so he had a different theory. He thought that the Rank B threshold was because that was the minimum rank at which monsters had sufficient Intelligence to understand orders and know not to attack each other out of the blue—at least under normal circumstances.

"Here, take this, *oink*."

The chef handed the tray over.

"U-Um, may I ask which way I'm supposed to go?"

"Oh right, you're new, *oink*. Go out, take the stairs you'll see and go up to the fourth floor, then go straight, *oink*. You'll see it. They just might kill you if you take your time, though, so hurry, *oink*."

"Thank you very much."

Propping the tray up with one hand, Ellie left the kitchen and followed the instructions she was given to find herself in front of a large pair of double doors. She slipped inside to see a spacious, dimly lit room. Several figures were seated

around a table in the center, indicating that this was a meeting room.

Oh! Are they demons? Or Demonic Deities?

Allen was getting excited from what he was seeing through Sharing. At the Academy, he had learned that the Demon Lord had demons and Demonic Deities under his command. However, it was only through Helmios's efforts that the mortal races first learned of the existence of these beings, so there was almost no information on them.

A closer look revealed that the one sitting at the far end of the table had the appearance of a man in his fifties with goatlike horns, dark skin, and purple hair. The expression on his face made it clear he was in a terrible mood.

Beside him was a younger man who also had goatlike horns, dark skin, and purple hair. This one looked quite troubled, probably because of how the older man seemed on the verge of blowing his top.

On the opposite side of the younger man was a bulky man who would probably be three meters tall if he stood up. He alone had the face of a hyena. It was hard to read his facial expression because of this, but unlike the other two, he had a calmer air about him.

Interesting. So these guys are demons. If that's the case, does that mean demons can be classified between having dark skin and purple hair or being beast-like in appearance? Oh, was that chef earlier a demon too, then? He could converse normally and seemed pretty different from the average orc or troll.

"Mm? Who're you?"

While Allen was busy with his thoughts, the older man at the head of the table noticed Ellie and glared at her.

This time, act confidently.

"Apologies for disturbing, my lord. I was ordered to bring you tea." Ellie flashed an elegant smile.

"Oh, that's a good idea. Lord Glaster, let's take a break. You there, girl, give us all a cup."

So the older guy is Glaster. Does the one who just spoke have a name too?

While the younger man good-naturedly prompted Ellie to serve them, the one with a hyena face stayed silent, keeping his arms crossed.

Ellie turned around with her back to the three to prepare the cups. When she tilted the teapot, a thick purple liquid flowed out.

What's this? A smoothie? Is it healthy?

As Allen stared at the tea that looked the furthest thing from delicious, a bang rang out behind Ellie's back.

BAM!

It was Glaster slamming a fist into the table. He had done so hard enough that his hand was almost buried in the wood.

"The report comes first, Neftira! We have to explain to Lord Rehzal in Fortenia why we lost the battle, but you've yet to submit your report! I was told that he could wait no longer and that he has already requested reinforcements from the main headquarters!"

"I'm sorry," the younger man replied meekly. "Almost all the Rank A monsters are dead, so we've pretty much lost all control over our Rank B ones."

Okay, so the younger one's name is Neftira. And even the Demon Lord Army uses the ranking system when describing the monsters. But most importantly, Glaster's last line... So it's already been decided that reinforcements are coming. Considering how we've already killed pretty much half the forces in Rohzenheim, I guess it makes sense.

According to reports, the Demon Lord Army currently had four million monsters on standby. When would they be arriving? How many of them would be coming? Allen continued listening in by Sharing his Summon's senses.

The hyena-faced man spoke up. "As I said, the Sovereign of Spirits probably turned into the God of Spirits, *huff*. That made the elves strong enough to beat us, *huff*."

"I feel like you're reaching a bit there, Yagof. It should be a while yet before the Sovereign has enough Worship Points. And even if he has been promoted, it shouldn't have made the elves *that* much stronger."

“Then what if the Spirit User was actually a Grand Spirit User, *huff*? Or maybe a High Tamer was born among the elves, *huff*? The reports mentioned giant ants and dragons fighting for the enemy, *huff*.”

“God of Spirits.” “Worship Points.” “High Tamer.” Words that Allen had never heard before were being mentioned in quick succession. He could somewhat guess at their meaning, but he could not fully understand them.

All these new words are making me so excited!

While still fighting monsters on his end, Allen tried to sort through all the information he had just gained.

First, of the three demons there, the oldest one’s name was Glaster and he was very likely the leader. The one who looked like him but younger and with longer hair was Neftira. Then lastly, the hyena-faced one who kept adding *huff* to the end of his sentences was Yagof. And Rehzal the Demonic Deity was the commander overseeing the entire force attacking Rohzenheim.

Neftira waved his hand dismissively at Yagof’s theory. “It’s impossible for there to be a Tamer capable of overwriting His Majesty’s Monster Subordination, no matter how superior their Talent may be. And if the elves had a Grand Spirit User with them, we wouldn’t have been able to get this far to begin with.”

Judging by the name, “Monster Subordination” must be an unbreakable contract—a curse, maybe?—that the Demon Lord has with all the monsters in this world. Looks like they’re really confused why my Summons, which they think are monsters, are fighting against them instead of with them.

Glaster continued listening to Neftira and Yagof exchange theories with his brows drawn together in a deep scowl.

“Here you go, my lords.”

Allen had told Ellie to take her time pouring the tea so as to gather as much intel as possible, but it would seem suspicious if she were too slow. When the timing seemed right, she set cups down in front of each of the three demons.

Seems like they know a lot less about me than I had thought. Well, that is why we’ve made it a priority to first take down all the eyeball bats at the start of

each battle.

It was Volmaar's duty to shoot down the bats, and Allen had never seen him miss a single one within his range of a kilometer. Even so, there had been times when the party had landed in order to fight the Army's monsters in person, so Allen had expected at least some information about him to have leaked. Perhaps their thoroughness in wiping out monsters for the sake of farming magic stones had played a huge part in this.

"So what you're basically saying is that, in the end, we know nothing!" Glaster roared. It was clear to him that they still had no idea why they had lost and that the conversation was simply looping around meaninglessly.

The Demon Lord Army had swiftly shifted tactics after their first major loss, coming back almost immediately with the one-million-strong host. This had led Allen to suspect that the demons had a spy among the elven generals or Elders who was leaking information to them. For all he knew, the reason why the demons moved so quickly was because they had been alarmed by the healing that the elves had suddenly gained access to. Given all this, one goal of this infiltration mission was to also determine the identities of any such moles. As it turned out, however, his fears had been unfounded.

Even the weakest demons were the equal of Rank A monsters, with some being closer to Rank S. The total stats of a Rank A monster were usually within the range of 3,000 to 6,000, meaning that underestimating the demons would usually end terribly.

As Allen became occupied with his thoughts again, Neftira turned to give Ellie a better look. "You're a new face. What's your name?"

Without faltering in the slightest, the Spirit B gave the name that Allen had assigned her. "It's Ellie, my lord."

"I see. What do you think, Ellie? Why do you think our army of one million lost?"

"I cannot presume to know. But if you want my conjecture..."

"Mm? You have one? Sure, more input can't hurt."

"Perhaps the Hero from Giamut has come?"

“No, that’s impossible. He’s currently on the Central Continent. The two million sent to Giamut were meant to keep him there, after all.”

Ellie’s suggestion was immediately denied by Neftira, who then turned to Glaster as if looking for confirmation. The older man nodded without saying anything.

Interesting, this confirms that they’re in communication with the forces on the Central Continent somehow. Okay, Ellie, now see if you can prompt them to talk about their next strategy.

“Then how about this, my lords: I have heard that Rohzenheim has access to recovery items that they call elven elixirs. What if they are using these elixirs to bring their troops back from the verge of death, and we, not knowing this, lost due to letting our guard down?”

Neftira crossed his arms. “Elven elixirs, huh... Yagof did mention that just now.”

“I did, *huff*,” Yagof confirmed. “The enemies were obviously too numerous, *huff*. If their wounded did not return, they would not have been able to put up a fight, *huff*.”

“If that conjecture is correct, they might have even more of these elixirs on hand.” Neftira rubbed his chin. “The same strategy might fail again next time.”

Glaster nodded again, then spoke up. “Naturally. That is why Lord Rehzal has ordered that we attack both over land from the north and from the sea to the south next.”

So they changed up their tactics again. And this time, they’re even coming from the sea... Ellie, try to get more out of them without raising their suspicions.

With the tray in hand, Ellie stepped back and took up position next to the door, acting like a maidservant. The demons continued their conversation having already forgotten about her.

“From the sea, is it?” Neftira asked. “As in, the army will be riding on the backs of monsters that can swim?”

“That’s right. At the southernmost tip of the continent is a port city named

Nest—that's where the majority of the elves have evacuated to. Lord Rehzal's instructions were to take that city first to fill the army's stomachs, then to march north."

The Demon Lord Army apparently also had tools that they were using to maintain constant contact between Fortenia and the Army's headquarters. According to Glaster, it was about time for headquarters to decide whether to send the reserves to Rohzenheim or to the Central Continent, the latter of which was putting up a fierce resistance despite supposedly losing their elven healers.

The Army did want to push further into Giamut, but they had ultimately decided to prioritize Rohzenheim, as they had already finished conquering more than half the country. Consequently, reserves would be sent to bolster the war effort here in order to launch a pincer attack, striking the northern front and Nest at the same time. By now, almost everyone who had been displaced by the war were gathered in the one city, bringing its population to around two million. If the monsters managed to take that city down, they could feed on the elves as food, reducing the burden to create a supply train for the force.

So they're attacking from two different directions this time... Well, as they said, they realized just throwing more bodies at us isn't good enough. This strategy would also be effective if their other guesses, like the elves having a Grand Spirit User, were true.

Even if the elves had possessed a particularly powerful fighter, this fighter still would not be able to be in two places at the same time. Allen was surprised that the Demon Lord Army already had a new strategy so soon. He felt very keenly aware of the fact that he was facing off against enemies whose Intelligence was in the thousands.

Ellie, continue staying with these monsters. Serve them while gathering whatever information you can.

"Your will is my command," the Spirit B murmured under her breath.

* * *

This whole time, Allen had been chasing down groups of the monsters that had fled into the countryside around Tiamo. He was now over ten kilometers

north of the city.

“Hmm, maybe we really should ask the elves to gather the magic stones instead of doing it ourselves.”

“Because we don’t have time?”

“Yeah. The Demon Lord Army’s already come up with a new plan.”

Standing next to 20,000 monster corpses, Allen proceeded to share what he had just learned with the rest of his companions.

Being the first to comprehend the situation, Sophie replied via a Summon, “You mean to say that the demons at Castle Lapolka are commanding all the monsters currently in Rohzenheim?”

“That’s right,” Allen confirmed. “However, there’s apparently a Demonic Deity in Fortenia as well. And he’s supposedly in very close contact with the chain of command over on the Forgotten Continent.”

“Well, are the demons strong?” Dogora asked. That was all that mattered to him.

Judging based on the information he currently held, Allen replied, “We were told at the Academy that demons are roughly as strong as Rank A monsters, and that seems about right. The big boss called Glaster, however, is probably quite a bit stronger than the other two.” Of course, Allen also noted that all he had seen Glaster do was drink tea and complain, so there was no way to know for sure.

“And you mentioned there being a Demonic Deity too?”

“Yep. His name is Rehzal, and he’s probably the highest-ranked commander for the forces attacking Rohzenheim.”

As she listened to the conversation and stared at all the corpses, Krena dejectedly said, “I couldn’t do it this time either.” The fact that she was still having trouble fully activating her Extra Skill was such a shock to her that none of what Allen had just said registered in her mind.

“Krena, you can definitely do it. Believe in yourself,” Allen replied.

“But I’ve already tried so many times.”

“Don’t worry about that. You can definitely do it. Who decided that you can’t?”

Looks like she’s really struggling with it. But it is true that Krena still hasn’t drawn out more than half the true worth of her Extra Skill. Once she actually masters it, it should make her as strong as the Hero in his natural state.

Once again, Allen took out his grimoire and compared Helmios’s and Krena’s Statues.

Helmios’s Stats (Status + Class Skill Bonus + Equipment Bonus)
Attack: 10,400 (2,400 + 3,000 + 5,000)
Endurance: 10,400 (2,400 + 3,000 + 5,000)
Agility: 8,400 (2,400 + 3,000 + 3,000)

Krena’s Stats With Limit Break Active (Status + Class Skill Bonus + Limit Break + Equipment Bonus)
Attack: 10,200 (2,400 + 1,800 + 3,000 + 3,000)
Endurance: 9,500 (1,700 + 1,800 + 3,000 + 3,000)
Agility: 8,400 (1,600 + 1,800 + 3,000 + 2,000)

Krena was wearing two rings that each gave her +1,000 Agility. When she activated Limit Break during the tournament at the Academy, she seemed to have gotten nearly as strong as the Hero. If Sword Lord Krena and Hero Helmios were able to fight on equal footing with each other, Krena would probably have the upper hand thanks to her automatic healing.

“I can’t use my skills at all!” Krena cried. “My mind goes all blank and—*Gyuuu!*”

Allen interrupted Krena’s attempt at describing what it was like with Limit Break by pulling her cheeks. “Listen—who decided that it’s impossible to use skills when using Limit Break? Was it Elmea, the God of Creation? Or was it you, Krena?”

“M-Me, I guess?”

When Limit Break was activated, Krena would go completely berserk, cutting down anything that approached her. However, all she was doing was swinging her weapon around with normal attacks that relied solely on her sheer strength. This was nowhere near as powerful as Helmios, who had been able to almost slay a Rank B Stone Summon with a single attack. If Krena could learn how to use skills in her Limit Break state, it would make her twice or thrice as powerful.

“Don’t limit yourself. You definitely can use your skills!” Allen said once more, still playing with Krena’s cheeks.



For now, I have no basis, but I'll continue encouraging Krena to keep at it. We do have a Demonic Deity battle waiting for us, after all.

"Okaaay. Thank you, Allen. I'll keep trying!"

"Good. You don't have that many tries, since you can only use it once a day. Krena, it's time for some training from hell!"

"Roger that!" Krena replied cheerfully, using a response from Allen's previous world that he had taught her.

"There they go again." Keel and the rest of the Gamers sighed wryly. Dogora, as the only one who had yet to activate his Extra Skill, tightened his grip on his ax without a word.

Chapter 9: Assault on Castle Lapolka

“Is this everyone?”

“Indeed. We did as you asked, Lord Allen.”

On the fourth morning after the second siege of Tiamo, the No-life Gamers returned to Tiamo to regroup with the elven forces that would be marching on Castle Lapolka.

Thanks to the Spirit Bs, Allen knew that the Demon Lord Army was sending all four million reserves to Rohzenheim. Part of the forces were circling around south to attack Nest and then punch their way through northward, while the rest would simply be marching southward over land. The former group was already on its way. Neither Nest nor Tiamo were equipped to deal with the numbers that they would be facing. Given all this, seizing Castle Lapolka was of paramount importance.

Even though every battle Allen had participated in since coming to this continent had ended as a victory for the elves, the Demon Lord Army still kept the momentum of the war firmly on its side through its overwhelming numbers and responsiveness in tactics.

Before, the elven generals had told Allen that they needed five days to assemble a force of 200,000 elven soldiers and that the force would then need ten more days to reach Lapolka on foot—but even that would take far too long. Additionally, once they succeeded in taking back the fortress, they would still require more time to fully restore its defensive capabilities. If the Demon Lord Army were to catch them in the middle of this process, the elves would be done in for certain.

Allen watched the soldiers rushing about in a hurry while asking a general, “How many troops are ready right now? And how many Bow Masters and Spirit Wizards?”

“We have 50,000 men ready for battle. Of that number, 3,700 are Bow

Masters and 3,900 are Spirit Wizards.”

I see, so there’s a total of 7,600 with two-star classes.

In light of the numbers he was given, Allen had an idea. “If my party clears the way, would it be possible to have these 50,000 reach Castle Lapolka in three days?”

“‘Clear...the way’?”

While giving it further consideration, Allen had realized that they would be too late if they waited the full five days for all the elven soldiers to get ready. Therefore, he was thinking of wiping out the 200,000 monsters that had retreated after their loss at Tiamo; this would create a safe passage for the magic ships. The Gamers had already spent the past three days dedicating themselves to this very task, bringing the number of roaming monsters down to under 20,000. They were now very scattered, making them that much harder to track down and annihilate. Allen was now proposing to lead the troops north and protect them should any of these free-roaming monsters decide to attack.

“What do you think, General?”

The elf gave his knee a quick slap in excitement. “Yes! The magic ships can be used that way.”

The original idea was for the elven force to march on land, but if they were guaranteed safe passage aboard a magic ship, then they could make the journey in two full days. From their landing point, they would have only a short distance to march before reaching Lapolka, therefore arriving within a max of three days.

“You plan on taking on Castle Lapolka with only 50,000 troops?!”

“Yes, General.”

The general looked straight into Allen’s eyes, then nodded. “Understood. We will have the troops board the magic ships immediately. Once everything is in order, I will board one of the ships as well. Lord Allen, we will be right behind you.”

Allen returned the general’s gaze head-on and nodded in turn. “You’re in safe

hands.”

* * *

A few hours later, eleven magic ships took off, ten carrying 5,000 soldiers each with the last one jam-packed with weapons and supplies. Rohzenheim’s greatest fighting strength, Gatoluuga, would also be participating in this assault on Castle Lapolka.

“Okay, we should get going too,” Allen said. “Cecil and Sophie, you two take care of the monsters that Volmaar doesn’t get to.”

“Understood, Lord Allen,” Sophie replied, looking happy about having received a task from him.

Without further ado, all the No-life Gamers mounted their Bird Bs and flew up in front of the magic ships. As always, Allen was at the head of the group, but Cecil was not the one riding with him this time.

“Volmaar, do your best,” Allen said encouragingly.

“Of course,” the elf replied in his usual deadpan manner.

Allen was sitting toward the rear, fully preoccupied with making Blessings of Heaven as always. Every so often, he used a Bird E’s Awakened Ability, Farsight, to check for monsters within a hundred-kilometer radius.

“There’s an eyeball bat to our right, slightly below us.”

“Got it.”

Allen would point out a monster, and once they got within a kilometer of it, Volmaar would dispassionately shoot it down. After all, a single magic ship sinking meant the loss of thousands of elven lives or precious supplies, all on top of losing the priceless vessel—practically all the magic ships in Rohzenheim were on loan from Giamut in exchange for elven healer squads. The burden of responsibility was great, but as expected of the one selected to be the princess’s bodyguard, Volmaar was carrying out his duties without breaking a sweat.

As I’d thought, Volmaar really is the best for long-distance attacks. His range is several times that of Cecil’s.

While feeling impressed, Allen checked his grimoire without stopping his hands.

Name: Volmaar
Age: 68
Class: Archer
Level: 60
HP: 1,322
MP: 716 + 1,000
Attack: 1,730 + 1,600
Endurance: 1,140
Agility: 727 + 600
Intelligence: 482
Luck: 783
Skills: Archer {6}, Keen Sight {6}, Long-Distance Target {6}, Strongbow {6}, Bull's-Eye {6}, Treading {2}, Bow Mastery {6}
Extra Skill: Arrow of Light

Skill Levels
Archer: 6
Keen Sight: 6
Long-Distance Target: 6
Strongbow: 6
Bull's-Eye: 6

The rings that Volmaar wore gave him +1,000 MP and +1,000 Attack, and thanks to his Keen Sight skill, he had especially sharp eyes. There were many others with this skill as well who were now on lookout duty aboard the magic ships.

“Seems like the monsters stationed within the occupied cities won’t come out to attack us,” Allen observed.

“They won’t?”

“Looks like it. Oh, we’re coming up on a few more bats. There and there.” Allen pointed toward the horizon. “A bit too far away right now; we’ll get to them once we’re closer.”

There were several settlements between Tiamo and Lapolka that had fallen to the Demon Lord Army. The monsters inside made no move to attack the passing ships, likely having orders from above to stay put. Still, the elves made sure to fly at a certain distance away; there was no point in unnecessarily provoking them, after all.

“Lord Allen,” Volmaar said abruptly without turning around from his seat in the front.

“Yes?” Allen, who had just refreshed his view once more with a Bird E, looked up from his work.

“May I ask what do you plan on doing with Rohzenheim?”

“What do you mean? We’re gonna wipe out the Demon Lord Army.”

Allen had indeed come to Rohzenheim because he had been ordered to, but now he was also personally invested in protecting this land Sophie and the elves called home.

“I mean afterward.”

“Hm? Didn’t I talk about this before in Academy City? We’ll be heading to the Rank S dungeon in Baukis next. You’re coming too, of course.”

You’re a valuable source of long-range DPS, and you’re guaranteed to get promoted to a four-star class once everything is over. Let’s stay friends for a long time.

“Oh...right.”

Volmaar had been a part of Allen’s group for more than ten months by now. They had eaten at the same table, slept in the same house, braved the dangers of the dungeons together, and were now working in concert to resist the Demon Lord Army’s encroachment upon Rohzenheim. What Volmaar wanted to know was what sort of designs Allen, with all the power he possessed, had for

Rohzenheim after the war. However, the conclusion he arrived at was “Oh right, Allen’s been like this from the start,” and that his question had been entirely pointless. Being a serious person, he kicked himself a little for the mistake.

Volmaar apparently had other questions that he had wanted to ask Allen. Every once in a while, one would come to mind and he would bring it up. This, in turn, made Allen realize that he needed to be more proactive as a leader about communicating with his party going forward.

* * *

Around noon the following day, all the magic ships landed a day’s march away from Castle Lapolka. Due to their proximity to the massive mountains that the fortress was perched on, the ground was already quite sloped and strewn with rocks. The officers barked out orders as the soldiers swiftly disembarked and began hurrying to and fro unloading the supplies ship.

As Allen and the generals watched all the activity going on, a Bird E scouted out the area within a one-hundred-kilometer radius. It found four main groups made up of 10,000 to 30,000 troops each. Allen marked them on a map laid out on the ground and asked his companions to take care of them.

“This one in the northeast only has around 10,000. Can you drop one of your Petit Meteors on it?”

“Sure thing. You’re not coming with us?”

“Not this time. I’ll be escorting the magic ships back with Volmaar.”

The magic ships had been fully unloaded and were ready to take off again. Once Allen and Volmaar saw them all back to Tiamo, they then had Griff use Jet to bring them back to the elven force.

* * *

“All forces, forward!”

“SIR, YES, SIR!”

The elven forces had finally come within sight of Castle Lapolka.

Damn, look at how high the cliffs go. This really is the perfect place for a fortress. We need to take it back so badly.

The road had started growing steep not far from where the magic ships had landed. It was wide, though, so the troops were marching with several men abreast. Allen's group was following along at the rear.

Castle Lapolka was perched in a notch halfway up two massive peaks that thrust up at sharp angles. Everything about the structure itself looked formidable, and the natural environment gave it even more of an edge—creating a fortress of this magnitude within a mountain chain of such towering peaks spoke volumes about the power of a Grand Spirit User. There were only two entrances: gates in the north and in the south. Both were tightly shut at the moment.

Oh, we've gotten pretty close. Time to get started.

Allen Summoned a Bird B and flew forward, temporarily leaving his companions behind. Walls three times taller than Tiamo's loomed ahead as he approached the front lines of the elven force. He already had a Bird E high up in the air, providing him a top-down view of the entire battlefield. Through Hawk Eye, he had confirmed that the walls of Castle Lapolka were fully manned with the maximum number of monsters that could fit on the battlements.

Okay, here's a wide open space. "Mirrors, come out. Shield the elves."

When Allen overtook the elves, he Summoned eight Stone Bs, separated into two rows of four. With every step they took, the ground shook.

THUD. THUD.

The elves needed to get close enough to the monsters to attack but did not have very high Endurance. For them, having a good shield was an absolute necessity. The soldiers were surprised for a second at the sudden appearance of the ten-meter-tall statues, but then managed to take it in stride after everything they had seen and heard about Allen's Summons from previous battles. Some of them just outright decided to stop questioning everything, instead focusing solely on doing what they could to protect their queen and country.

Soon, the elves were in formation. However, they were staying back a little in order to observe how the monsters would react. Of course, the monsters had been aware of their approach for quite a while by now. By the looks of things,

however, they were perfectly happy to stay on the defensive for this battle, as they showed no intention of sallying forth.

When Allen returned to his friends, Cecil asked somewhat impatiently, “Well? Aren’t they gonna attack us?”

Allen shook his head. “There’s nothing for them to gain from bringing the fight to us. We’ll probably have to get a bit closer before anything happens.”

Elven bows could reach a maximum range of one kilometer, even in the hands of those with one-star classes, so long as the archer was at max level. Naturally, this was the same for monsters using bows. And the closer the distance, the more accuracy and punching power. As such, both sides were simply staring each other down at the moment.

Wow, look at their numbers, though. They freaking tripled in a single day!

Paying no mind to the tension in the air, Allen occupied himself going over the intel he had learned through the Spirit Bs’ efforts.

There were 300,000 monsters inside Castle Lapolka at the moment. It had been only 100,000 until yesterday, but news of the elves’ approach had prompted the Demon Lord Army to swiftly gather any nearby troops. This was why the castle walls were now chock-full of monsters.

The elven army continued creeping forward, everyone’s nerves at an all-time high. When they passed the one-hundred-meter mark, a gong suddenly rang out, prompting the skeletons on the walls—all Rank B and therefore several times taller than normal humans—to draw their bows in unison. The sight of so many arrows over 150 centimeters long getting nocked was daunting, to put it mildly.

Without further warning, the Demon Lord Army’s bowmen unleashed their first volley, kicking off the battle. Explosive spells followed on the heels of the arrows, keeping the Stone Bs very busy as they tried to block everything with their shields.

“Erect stone walls to protect the Spirit Mages and Spirit Wizards! Hurry!”

“SIR, YES, SIR!”

Because the monsters were attacking from a much higher position, some of their attacks were still reaching the elves. In addition, the Stone Bs disappeared when they took too much damage, and at that point the monsters could simply aim beyond the Stone Bs. The elves therefore still needed to erect multiple layers of barriers to protect themselves.

“Return fire! Annihilate the monsters that seized our fortress!”

“RAAAAAAHHHH!”

The elven archers and mages fought back against the monsters with equal ferocity. Because the crenellations of the fortress walls had been built for elven proportions, the monsters were completely exposed along the top of the wall, providing the elves with large targets. Other elves also fired arrows high up into the sky so their projectiles would arc to hit the monsters farther in the back. Once again, they did not have to worry about rationing their MP. Allen had passed on more than enough Blessings of Heaven for them to continue spamming their abilities all day long.

At the same time, Allen was busy monitoring the monsters behind the fortress walls and passing along their precise locations to the elves using Bird F’s Transmission. The elves were aiming according to this information, taking care to prioritize any eyeball bats that came into range. Letting the enemy’s scouts through would just be asking for trouble.

“Ballista incoming! Everyone, get behind a wall!”

“SIR, YES, SIR!”

Large bolt throwers designed for fending off large monsters appeared on the ramparts. The monsters had figured out how to properly use all the equipment the elves had left behind when they abandoned the place, proving that they really did have high Intelligence.

The next moment, a huge boom rang out, accompanied by a large shaft that was flying at the elven army.

Mirror, use Total Reflect!

A Stone B wordlessly braced its shiny metal shield. The projectile made the shield tremble when it collided, but it quickly lost its momentum. It fell to the

ground with a heavy thud, its arrowtip completely flattened.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

The next instant, the shield unleashed a blinding AoE shock wave based on the damage it had just taken, blasting away all the monsters on an entire section of the wall.

Stone Bs had Reflect and Total Reflect as their Ability and Awakened Ability, respectively. Reflect doubled the Summon's Endurance and reflected the damage it just took back toward its opponent. Total Reflect tripled the Stone B's Endurance as well as tripled the damage taken before reflecting it back as a conal attack that blasted everything in front of it. Of course, it had a cooldown time of a full day.

Oh, that killed a few hundred of them. But the walls still look completely unaffected.

The attack just now should have hit the walls too, but based on what Allen could see through Bird E, not a single crack was to be seen.

It was said that a Grand Spirit User, one of whom appears only once in a thousand years, had borrowed the power of an earth spirit to raise a large number of fortresses and fortified walls, with Castle Lapolka being one such place. His power had been so great that these structures were impervious to weathering, standing firm and sound even after a thousand years. Sure enough, although the Demon Lord Army had managed to breach the northernmost fortress, its walls remained largely unharmed. It was because the monsters knew they could not destroy the walls that they had switched to a strategy that involved overwhelming the elves with sheer numbers.

When we get this fortress back, we should be more than capable of putting up a good fight even when the Demon Lord Army's reserves arrive. Oh? It's time.

When Allen looked up, he found the sun perched at its zenith. According to his magic tool, it was slightly past noon. Three hours had passed since the elven army began marching this morning.

Field Marshall Lukdraal, whom Allen had met in Nest, hurried over. "Taking Castle Lapolka from the front really is hopeless. Are you sure your strategy will

work?”

Even though casualties were being kept to a minimum thanks to Allen’s cooperation, it was clearly impossible for the elves to win this battle any time soon. However, Allen confirmed that everything was still going smoothly and the monsters’ tripled numbers were no issue.

In Allen’s previous life, it was generally believed that an attacking force needed three times the numbers to overwhelm a defending force behind walls. In this world, the defending side having the advantage was considered common sense too. Trying to defeat a force of 300,000 using only 50,000 was absolute folly, and naturally someone had pointed this out at the strategy meeting.

After they heard Allen’s strategy, however, the elves had decided to entrust their 50,000 men to him. Some seemed doubtful whether he could actually pull off what he was proposing, but the queen and Field Marshal Lukdraal, based on all the other miracles they had witnessed him perform, chose to place their faith in him once more. As such, everything was now squarely on Allen’s shoulders.

If I fail, the elves would be losing a very significant part of their main attacking force.

Picking up on the apprehension in the field marshal, Allen said confidently, “Everything is within expectations. It was a bit surprising seeing more monsters here, but it doesn’t make a difference. Keep up the assault until nighttime, then have the troops retreat back here.”

“Very well. We must win.”

“And we will—victory is just around the corner. Oh, one final reminder: please ensure that the troops stop using their Extra Skills.”

Field Marshal Lukdraal looked around and saw in Allen’s companions’ eyes the complete trust they had in him. He resolved himself to look forward to yet another miracle.

* * *

After entrusting overall command of the troops to Field Marshal Lukdraal, Allen brought his companions back the way they had come.

Now then, we spent the entire day yesterday marching, which should have been enough time for the monsters to the north and south of the fortress to get moving.

Allen's Bird Es were keeping eagle eyes on the situation in Castle Lapolka's surroundings. The monsters in the cities that the elven army had passed earlier were now coming out and heading over as a massive force. Obviously, they were aiming to catch the elves now assaulting Lapolka from behind.

The monsters within a day's walking distance north of Castle Lapolka had already arrived. The ones who had been farther away were now on the road making their way over. In a few days, all the monsters near Castle Lapolka would be gathered in full force.

As usual, the Demon Lord Army sure is quick on its feet. Hmm, those three demons aren't coming out, though.

The Spirit Bs were still undercover inside the fortress. According to them, Glaster, Neftira, and Yagof were still staying put.

While walking down a mountain path, Allen shared all the info he had with his companions.

"So, yep. The Demon Lord Army's moving really fast, but everything's still within expectations."

"I see. Glad to hear it," Cecil replied.

"All right, Cecil and Volmaar, keep a lookout for me, please. If you see an eyeball bat, shoot it down right away."

"You got it."

"Understood, Lord Allen."

Allen then called out Beast G, a mole-like Summon the size of a dog. *Moley, do your thing!*

Although Moley could not talk, it wiggled its body a little to express its happiness at being called out and relied on.

Krena peered at it curiously. "So you're having this little guy dig. But Allen, the ground here's really hard."

“You’re right, it’s bare bedrock here. Even so, Moley, use Dig.”

The Summon shot Allen an uneasy look, then turned to use its Ability where it had been ordered to. However, nothing happened. Even when it used its Awakened Skill, the end result was the same.

“It’s not working, Allen.”

“Krena, Moley’s Ability is ‘Dig.’ Not ‘Dig Dirt.’”

“What do you mean?”

Instead of answering, Allen used Strengthening on Beast G. It flexed its claws, feeling the extra thousand Attack points, then attacked the ground once more. Lo and behold, it started digging out a huge hole at astonishing speed. When it used its Awakened Skill, its pace accelerated even faster.

“Incredible...”

Krena’s eyes followed Moley as it continued making a tunnel through what was essentially solid rock, her eyes sparkling. What she was seeing was giving her great reassurance in regard to her own Extra Skill—in the same way it had not been specified in Allen’s grimoire that Moley would not be able to dig through rock, there was nothing saying that she would not be able to use her own skills while Limit Break was active.

Dogora, who was right behind Allen, murmured self-deprecatingly, “In my case, first I’ve gotta manage what *is* written, though.”

“That’s right,” Allen agreed, taking on a mature air. “The first step is to properly understand the *basics* of how something works. Then you can explore how to *develop* it.”

“Basics and development, huh...”

Ever since their Academy days, Allen had frequently gone on and on about skills, levels, and stats. He considered these concepts the fundamentals of how this world worked and believed that adequately understanding them was the key in growing stronger. One who remained bound to the basics would not be able to grow any further; continuously seeking ways to develop oneself was important.

“Dogora, imagine if my power was to make Moley dig. By properly understanding how stats affect what it can do, I was able to come up with a way to help it achieve what it couldn’t before. In the same way, your first order of business is to figure out what you yourself are capable of.”

“What I’m capable of...” Dogora stared at his friend’s back.

Allen had turned back to giving Moley instructions as it was starting to make serious headway. Every once in a while, he also Summoned a Fish D to confirm its location and the most direct route to the fortress. Thanks to the Spirit Bs, Allen knew where the monsters were spread thinnest during the day’s fighting. Combined with the information about the monsters’ formations that he was receiving from the Bird E in the sky, he now had a good idea where he wanted the exit to be.

“What I’m capable of...” Dogora mumbled to himself again under his breath. It went unheard by Allen, who was now fully occupied by the progress of the tunnel.

* * *

Allen ordered Moley to stop digging when the tunnel was almost through to the other side—the rest would be for tomorrow, the day when they would enact their strategy. Coincidentally, both armies were just now breaking off the engagement for the day. The rumble of countless trampling feet shook the ground for some time.

Compared to the trolls and ogres, the skeletons did not look particularly tired, but they still made no move to pursue the retreating elven forces. They clearly had zero intention of coming out of the gates of their own accord. In all likelihood, they were waiting for reinforcements to arrive so as to catch the elves on both sides.

When night fell, the No-life Gamers summoned the elven generals inside their tent with the door flaps drawn and a fire lit. As everyone gathered around a simple model of Castle Lapolka and the areas to its north and south, Allen finally revealed the full details of his plan to infiltrate Lapolka through the tunnel he had made today.

“I see. So, things are going well.”

“Yes they are, Field Marshal. Let’s work out the final details tonight.”

Although Allen had met Lukdraal in Nest, the field marshal had apparently been the leading commander of the northernmost fortress. As could be expected of someone entrusted with such a huge responsibility, he was both fiercely loyal and open-minded. This was a situation which Lukdraal would normally retreat from, but here he was, still leading these 50,000 troops, because he could see in Sophie’s eyes just how much faith she had in Allen.

“Now, about the movements of the monsters surrounding Lapolka...” Allen continued.

Through the Spirit Bs, Allen had confirmed that of the four million reserves, three million would be attacking by land and one million would be approaching Nest from the sea.

Pretty surprised that they mobilized all four million at once. Do they want Rohzenheim that badly?

“The situation...does not look good,” Lukdraal groaned.

“That might be so, but we can pull through,” Allen reassured him.

The Demon Lord Army was focusing on gathering numbers because it knew it would win by simply holding on. Conversely, that meant the elves had a very narrow window to take back this giant fortress positioned in such a defensible position.

“Ha ha, looks like we’re very much backed into a corner. However, you are saying that we do not have the luxury of choice. Is that so, Lord Allen?”

“Yes, Field Marshall.”

“In that case, we shall go with your strategy. We will dedicate everything we have to recapturing Castle Lapolka.”

“Thank you, sir. Now, let’s go into details. Based on the positioning of the monsters, we will be infiltrating from...”

The lamps burned until quite late into the night as Allen and the elven generals finalized their strategy for the following day.

* * *

Allen awoke from his nap the next morning and found the soldiers already starting to get into formation as he was going through his morning routine.

“We shall be in your care today, Lord Allen,” one of the generals said in greeting.

“And I, in yours. We’ll, uh, be heading out at the agreed time,” Allen replied in a slightly flustered tone.

“Of course. Do not worry, there’s still plenty of time till then.”

Everyone was aware that Allen was even cutting down on his sleep to fight for Rohzenheim. Given this, no one ever hurried him.

Eventually, the force of 50,000 set off once again at the same time they had the day before.

“We shall recapture Castle Lapolka today!”

“RAAAAAAAH!”

Of the 6,600 total soldiers with two-star classes, 1,600 were currently at the very front of the formation, with the remaining 5,000 at the rear being led by Allen. Soon, this group split off from the main force to proceed down a side path that eventually ended at a gigantic boulder. Krena and Dogora, having maxed out their levels, easily pushed it aside to reveal the gaping entrance of a tunnel wide enough for two men to walk abreast. This was the very tunnel that Beast G had dug out yesterday.

Allen finally revealed the full details of today’s strategy to this force of 5,000, prompting them to cheer out loud. At the same time, they realized that the outcome of today’s battle rested squarely on their shoulders and redoubled their vigilance.

“It’s time to go in. Everyone, stay in formation!”

“SIR, YES, SIR!”

Allen took out an illumination magic tool and led the way into the winding passageway.

“Sophie, would you be able to bury this tunnel afterward with an earthen spirit?”

“Of course, Lord Allen. However, considering the future, would it not be better to keep the tunnel and only bury the entrances on both ends?”

Oh right, if the Demon Lord Army is attacking from the north, it would be helpful to have a secret passage leading south.

Allen turned around to face Sophie and noticed one elf illuminating his way with a ball of light in the palm of his hand instead of a magic tool like everyone else.

Oooo, that's a two-star Spirit Wizard with Light Magic. I heard the elemental skills that someone gets are totally random, and that Light Magic is pretty rare.

One-star Spirit Mages could borrow the strength of spirits, whereas two-star Spirit Wizards could borrow the power of grand spirits. The magnitude of the spells they could cast with aid from either source differed immensely.

Someone in Normal Mode would gain a total of six skills by the time they reached max level, two of which would be stat-boosting ones. That left four slots that would eventually be filled with elemental skills, with the full list of all ten elements being fire, earth, wind, water, wood, lightning, light, darkness, void, and time. This was where the randomness that Allen mentioned came in. However, the chances of getting fire, earth, wind, or water skills were much higher than all the others, and Sophie was no exception.

Name: Sophialohne

Age: 48

Class: Spirit Mage

Level: 60

HP: 723

MP: 1,621 + 1,600

Attack: 598

Endurance: 657 + 1,000

Agility: 844

Intelligence: 903 + 600

Luck: 840

Skills: Spirit {6}, Fire {6}, Earth {6}, Wind {6}, Water

{6}, Juvenile Spirit {2}

Extra Skill: Grand Spirit Manifestation

Skill Levels

Spirit: 6

Fire: 6

Earth: 6

Wind: 6

Water: 6

Sophie is wearing a +1,000 MP ring and a +1,000 Endurance ring.

Water and wood spirits granted healing abilities, whereas earth and wind spirits specialized in defensive spells. As such, the large majority of elves borrowing the power of fire, earth, wind, and water spirits could still heal themselves. This was the reason why they were generally considered healing and defense specialists.

Several hours of walking later, the force reached the end of the tunnel.

“This is it.”

Allen held his magic tool aloft, illuminating the wall of stone brick up front. This deviation from the bare rock along the sides of the tunnel as well as the pounding of monster feet hurrying to and fro above confirmed that Castle Lapolka was indeed on the other side of this wall. Allen then promptly began buffing the entire elven force using his Fish-type Summons, going whole hog by repeatedly making new cards to use their Awakened Abilities. At the same time, the elves also invoked the powers of earth and wind spirits to buff each other.

“All right, get ready.” Allen turned around to issue commands. “The scouts and those assigned to open the south gate are to come with me.”

The soldiers replied in a soft voice, “Sir, yes, sir.”

“Those assigned to take over the walls are to follow Gatoluuga,” Allen added.

Catching Allen’s eye, Gatoluuga nodded and said, “Indeed. Leave the walls to

me.” His attitude toward Allen had softened considerably since the two battles at Tiamo after he had come to acknowledge Allen’s achievements.

“Sir, yes, sir,” the elves said once again.

Allen checked the time in his grimoire. *Ten minutes to noon. It’s go time.*

The next part of the plan was going to be very time-sensitive.

“It’s the appointed time. Let’s do this, everyone!”

“RAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!” The elves burst into the fortress filled with monsters, this time roaring at the top of their lungs as if trying to rattle the very structures with their battle cries.

* * *

The tunnel opened up in the western corner of Castle Lapolka next to the south gate. The staircase leading up to the square walls surrounding the fortress was right in front of Allen’s eyes, but he ignored it, instead taking off toward the south gate with 2,000 elves following close behind. It did not take the monsters long to notice and start attacking them.

“Doras, Cerbys, Antsys, Mirrors, Steelys, come out!”

The Summons appeared en masse and immediately leaped into action. The Dragon Bs and Beast Bs got to work mowing down the nearest monsters as the Insect Bs and Stone Bs shielded the elves. Stone Cs were on hand to use their Awakened Ability, Sacrifice, to fill in the gaps left in the Rank B Summons’ defense. All of them worked in concert to ensure that the elves could safely leave the tunnel. The elves, in turn, swiftly ran toward the south gate, hugging the southern wall and trailing behind Allen.

It feels so different seeing these numbers in person compared to seeing them through Hawkins’s bird-eye view. We don’t have time to deal with all of them though, so don’t let me down!

Even though Allen had confirmed that this corner of the fortress was relatively unoccupied the day before, there were now numerous monsters rushing their way. Krena and Dogora handily wiped the floor with them, but robed monsters along the walls took the opportunity to raise their staves. Some

cast healing on their allies as others fired spells at the invading elves.

Ah, it just struck twelve. Time's run out for all of you! Now die!

A blinding light suddenly filled the sky before turning into countless arrows of pure energy that bombarded the magic-using monsters. Attacks packing far more destructive power than those the elves had launched when they were emerging from the tunnel rained down throughout the fortress, erasing the enemy in the blink of an eye.

"Beautiful! The timing was perfect!" Allen grinned.

Cecil beamed back. "Looks like it went well!"

As the dazzling projectiles continued shredding apart the monsters, Allen shouted, "That's our cover fire! Run for the gate! *Run!* And stick close to the wall if you don't want to die!"

"SIR, YES, SIR!"

The shining projectiles were, of course, the Extra Skills of the elves still outside the fortress. They had been ordered to not use them since noon the day prior, as most Extra Skills had a cooldown time of one whole day; naturally, they were all able to use them now.

The force outside, including the 1,600 with two-star classes who had stayed behind earlier, now split up into platoons of a hundred each, with them taking turns firing in order to keep up an unending barrage of cover fire for those inside.

"Krena, Dogora, Cerby, I'm leaving the gate guards to you!" Allen shouted.

"You got it!" Dogora replied as Cerby barked, "Yes, Master!" and the two charged at the pair of Rank A monsters standing guard.

As for me, I've gotta keep everyone updated.

When the troops were split into several forces, just as they were now, it was of paramount importance that they let each other know what they were doing. The situation was changing by the second, so Allen was using a Bird E to monitor everything and a Bird F's Transmission to keep those on both sides of the wall up-to-date. Information was strength.

After the 2,000 with Allen had cleared the tunnel, the remaining 3,000 surged out and took the staircase directly in front of the exit. They swiftly occupied the now empty ramparts and took over providing cover fire for Allen's group, coordinating with them and enabling them to successfully reach the south gate.

From there, dozens of scouts immediately got to work on the gate itself. It did not take them long. The moment the elves outside finished getting into formation, the heavy double doors swung wide open with a deep rumble.

The 45,000 elves immediately charged forward, shaking the ground violently with the pounding of their boots. Inside, Allen and Gatoluuga shouted at their respective forces in unison: "Our allies are coming! Keep the monsters away to let them through!"

This time, the ones on the inside were providing the cover fire. Just as those on the outside had, they unleashed their Extra Skills as hundred-man platoons to maintain a constant barrage, raining their attacks on the monsters that were gathering to push the elves back out of the south gate.

"The gate is ours! Defend it!"

"RAAAAAAHHHH!"

As the elves swiftly set up massive formations in front of the gate, Allen's group moved on to their next objective.

Chapter 10: Fighting Demons

“You actually pulled it off, Lord Allen!”

“I’m glad the strategy went well.”

When the field marshal’s forces entered Lapolka and regrouped with Allen’s, Lukdraal immediately rushed over, looking ecstatic. Allen believed that when assaulting a fortress, occupying the gate was crucial, and Lukdraal shared that view.

“However, now all the troops aside from the healers have expended their Extra Skills.”

“That’s true. But thanks to that, half of the enemies inside have been wiped out. We should be able to finish off the rest given half a day.”

This time, the elves had focused most of their efforts on taking the gate as they figured this approach was the surest way of bringing down the fortress. Being specialized in long-range attacks such as bows and spells made the elves proficient at protecting a fixed location, even more so with the aid of fortifications. Consequently, they had held nothing back and used all their Extra Skills for the sake of seizing this point. Thanks to that decision, they now had control of the south gate and half of the 300,000 monsters within Castle Lapolka were dead.

Gatoluuga’s group was currently concentrating on wiping out any monsters on standby that knew how to heal, cast spells, or otherwise deal damage from a distance. Quite a number of them had let their guard down, having placed excessive faith in the tall walls of the fortress.

Even so, the monsters still outnumbered the elves three to one. The real fight was only just beginning.

“Field Marshal, I will be bringing my forces to regroup with those on the walls now. Then we will be moving on to the next stage of the plan.”

“Understood. Wish you all the best.”

The officers under Allen's command swiftly gathered their troops and assembled before him. It was time to proceed to the next phase of their plan to fully occupy the fortress.

Castle Lapolka was surrounded by fortified walls on all four sides, but because it was sandwiched between precipitous peaks to the east and west, only its north and south walls were designed to be manned by troops. The 3,000 soldiers with Gatoluuga had begun the operation in the southwest corner and were working their way north, currently having made headway halfway down the length of the wall.

"All right, follow me! We'll be clearing the east wall!"

"SIR, YES, SIR!"

I still can't get used to having people respond to me like that.

Allen cleared his head with a small shake, then struck off for the southeast corner with his companions and the elven troops under his command, killing everything in their way. If the elves managed to seize the towering walls in the north and south, they would have aerial supremacy over the entire compound, enabling them to massacre the monsters with ease. The Demon Lord Army was well aware of this and was therefore doing all it could to protect crucial choke points.

Allen's group finally reached the southeast staircase after taking great pains and began fighting their way up one step at a time. Whenever one of the Summons was done in, Allen immediately created and called out a replacement.

My stock of magic stones is... Yeah, I used a ton these past two days, so I only have about 20,000 left. Gotta push hard here so I can get another 300,000 after this battle.

If possible, Allen wanted to avoid spamming Dragon B's Awakened Ability as a tactic, as doing so obliterated the monsters along with their magic stones. Thanks to the elves' efforts, though, it was looking like he would be able to harvest almost all the stones this time.

"Wait, the demons are coming to the south gate?"

According to the three Ellies still undercover inside the fortress, the demons were getting ready to sortie. Glaster had become enraged by how the battle was progressing and could not hold back any longer.

C'mon, why're you coming here? It'd have been so much more convenient for us if you'd just run away.

From his position on top of the wall, Allen could see Glaster plowing through the throngs of monsters as he made a beeline for the south gate, Neftira and Yagof in tow.

Allen turned to his officers. "I'm sorry, everyone, but my party needs to take care of *that*. Please continue pushing on as you were. Griffs, come out!"

With that, the No-life Gamers promptly threw themselves onto the backs of the Bird Bs that had abruptly appeared with shrill cries of "*Kieeee!*" They then immediately headed back, landing in the large open area immediately behind the gate where elves and monsters were locked in deadly battle.

Several minutes later, the demons arrived. The one at the front, Glaster, was emanating such pressure that troops from both sides broke up their engagement and stepped back to watch how the situation would unfold.

When Glaster laid eyes on the Bird Bs, he growled, "Was it you lot?"

"What do you mean?" Allen replied.

"I'm asking if it was you who came up with the plan to seize this fortress and made goddamn fools out of us!"

Ah, he's getting pissed now. Can't blame him—even if he turned tail here, he'd be held responsible for doing so on top of losing Castle Lapolka. For all I know, he may even be executed if he loses today's battle. I bet you never imagined you'd lose the south gate in a day with six-to-one odds, eh, Glaster?

"Pretty much. Thanks to the elves' cooperation, everything went swimmingly. Of course, it definitely helped that our enemy's generals were such morons."

There was nothing to gain in revealing his identity at this time, so Allen just gave a vague answer. Of course, he also took the opportunity to slip in an insult to rile Glaster up even more.

“Y-Y-You! I’ll *kill* you! I’ll kill you with my own hands! Neftira! Yagof! To me!”

“Yes, Lord Glaster.”

“Understood, *huff*.”

Easily falling for Allen’s provocation, the three demons immediately assumed fighting stances. Glaster wielded a greatsword, Neftira held a staff, and Yagof wore knuckle-dusters. Allen instantaneously analyzed their fighting styles based on their formation and barked out commands to his own companions.

“Krena, you take the big guy. Volmaar, take out the younger one. Dogora, the beastkin’s all yours.”

“The big guy? Okay.” Krena leveled her gaze at Glaster and tightened her grip on her sword.

As the war with the Demon Lord Army would still be continuing, Allen wanted to conceal the details of his intel-gathering methods for as long as possible. This was why, despite knowing the three demons’ names, he still referred to them with rough descriptions. It would be harder to fight them if they were allowed to cooperate with each other, so Allen assigned members of his party to one-on-one matches with each before continuing to study them.

Neftira’s really good at positioning himself. We should focus fire on Yagof first, then.

Allen had wanted to start by taking down Neftira, who was clearly the mage. However, Allen realized that he was actually standing where he could use Glaster as a shield at any time. If pressed, it seemed likely that he would take things into a much more chaotic combined fight, so Allen decided to prioritize the last one, Yagof.

The No-life Gamers also quickly made themselves battle ready.

“Hmph!”

“Oof!”

The fight began with Glaster swinging his greatsword, sending Krena and her griffin flying. Dogora suffered a similar fate facing Yagof.

As I feared, we’re still not strong enough to fight demons one-on-one. Things

might be different if Krena is using Limit Break, but even with it, I'm not sure she can defeat a Rank A solo.

The difference in stats between the Gamers and the demons became obvious after they exchanged a few blows. The latter were very much living up to their reputations.

"Krena, stay on him! Keel, focus on healing her!"

"Okay!"

"Gotcha!"

"Cecil, you and I are gonna take down the beastkin first."

"Very well."

We need to take them down one by one.

Yagof was nearly twice as tall as Dogora. As Allen and Cecil moved to support Dogora, his giant ax met the demon's giant knuckles.

"Ugh!"

Dogora utterly lost the exchange and was blasted backward along with his Bird B. At that same moment, Cecil launched a massive fireball at the demon. Yagof had only just attacked Dogora and had yet to recover his stance, and he ended up taking the attack head-on.

"One more—"

"Not happening! Ice Shot!"

Cecil was about to follow up her previous attack when a huge icicle flew at her from an unexpected direction. Of course, it had been from Neftira. Cecil yelped in surprise as her Griff suddenly leaped sideways to evade at Allen's command.

As Allen was monitoring the vision from the five Bird Bs, the Bird E up in the sky, and his own eyes, he had no blind spots. Despite this, Neftira's spells were too fast and his movements so refined that dodging them would prove quite a challenge.

Allen pulled himself together and gave Cecil's Bird B further instructions to

avoid everything that came her way so she could focus solely on dishing out damage.

As for me...I currently have three slots that I can Summon with.

Almost all of Allen's Summons were fighting along the other walls at the moment, but a few that had been serving as shields had apparently been done in, freeing up slots that he could now use here.

"Doras, Cerby, come out!"

On command, two Dragon Bs and one Beast B appeared. He ordered one Dragon B to keep Neftira busy by using Fire Breath from a distance while the remaining two Summons joined the fight against Yagof.

'Cause Yagof is still our first objective.

The barrage of attacks eventually started getting through Yagof's guard, leaving more and more wounds on his body.

"RAAAAAAH!"

Seeing an opportunity, Dogora landed a full-power swing. This time, it was Yagof who was sent flying, and he crashed into a residential building, bringing an entire wall down on himself.

"Get your shit together, Yagof!"

"I-I'm fine, *huff*."

From a distance away, Glaster commanded in a roar that shook the ground, "*Enough*. Open your Extra Gate."

Huh? What's that?

"Yes, sir, *huff*!"

The hyena-faced man slowly stood back up as a heat haze sprang up around him. The next instant, he had closed in on Dogora and was already mid-swing.

So demons have Extra Skills too! Return, Dora! Come out, Mirror!

It took Allen less than a split second to decide the best course of action. One of the Dragon Bs assigned to fight Yagof disappeared and was immediately replaced by a Stone B that appeared right in front of Dogora. The Summon

lifted its round shield as Yagof, who had been somewhat caught off guard by its sudden appearance, threw a punch with all of his might.

The two collided with a great crash. Although Mirror's shield did crack a little, it managed to fully absorb Yagof's attack. There was a beat of silence, then a dazzling light burst forth and Yagof was sent flying once more.

Nice! As expected of a move that withstood even an attack from the Hero!

"Yagof!" Glaster cried.

Allen was not one to let an opportunity go. He knew Yagof would go flying and had therefore positioned the two remaining Summons accordingly.

"Use Hellfire of Fury and Ninefold Crunch, NOW!"

Yagof staggered to his feet, dazed from being slammed against a wall twice in quick succession. Before he could gather himself again, the Summons' attacks fell without mercy.

<You have defeated 1 demon. You have earned 6,400,000 XP.>

Oh wow, the demon gave XP. This amount is eighty percent according to the rules of distribution, which means the full value is eight million. That's even more than the dragon boss! Hrm, it was surprising that they have Extra Skills too. What was it that Glaster called it? Ah, right, "Extra Gate." Interesting.

"H-How dare you!"

"One down, two to go. We're getting there."

Allen's composure cut a sharp contrast with Glaster's rage.

"Who the fuck *are* you all?! You're not elves!"

"What makes you think I'll tell you? And you should really be worrying about yourself, not me."

"What does *that* mean?!"

The fighting had been paused due to Allen and Glaster's exchange. Their

respective companions, as well as the soldiers nearby, listened intently.

“It means you’re gonna die here. That’s the least you can do to atone for making such a mess out of Rohzenheim.”

“What—”

Honestly, though, I’d have more to gain if they’d run away. If I’d sent Ellie with them, I might’ve even gained intel on Demonic Deity Rehzel.

If the three demons had withdrawn to Fortenia with a regiment of their forces, Spirit B could possibly have been able to blend in and find a way to be present when the demons reported to their superior, the one who was presumably in command of all the monster forces in Rohzenheim. However, that plan had flown out the window the moment Glaster blew his top and dragged the other two demons with him to the south gate.

“Dogora and Krena, focus on this guy. His Attack seems to be ridiculously high, so be careful not to take any of his strikes head-on.”

“Noted,” Dogora nodded, lifting his battleax in readiness. “Thanks for the backup just now.”

Glaster similarly lifted his greatsword and the fighting resumed. The No-life Gamers surrounded him, piling on the attacks while maintaining a certain distance.

At the same time, Allen turned to target Neftira and back Volmaar up. The demon was dodging all of the elf’s arrows through skillful maneuvering and even healed Glaster every once in a while. He was also firing off the occasional Attack Magic from behind Glaster’s back. All in all, Volmaar was having trouble dealing with him on his own.

Here’s how a Summoner fights! “Dora, Cerby, go!”

Roaring loudly, the two Summons appeared right behind Neftira, who was in turn watching Glaster’s back. Their attacks landed on him just as he turned around.

“ARGH!”

Both attacks caught Neftira directly.

Good. He probably has an Extra Skill too, so let's quickly finish him before he uses it.

"Dora, Hellfire of Fury."

A newly made Dragon B used its Awakened Ability, blasting Neftira directly away to where another fresh Beast B was laying in wait. It, too, used its Awakened Ability as Allen directed. Even when Allen was far away, he could deal close-quarters damage to enemies. The Summoner class shone in how it could easily slip into an opponent's blind spot and take advantage of their weak points.

Problem was, Neftira was using everything he had to heal himself. Despite having taken so many Awakened Abilities, he was still alive.

"He's like a cockroach... Guys, I think we might have to focus on the old guy instead. Wear him down while I make sure this other one can't heal him. If he activates his Extra Skill, step back."

"Okay!" Krena nodded.

Allen had started off thinking that Neftira, being a mage, would have low Endurance and thus be easy to defeat. When he learned that was not the case, however, he promptly changed up his strategy.

"Now I see," Glaster suddenly murmured. "With that much power... You must be a Liberated. To think that one has appeared among the humans..."

"Huh? What was that? 'Liberated'? You're talking about me? Wait, is it 'liberated' as in having opened that 'Extra Gate' you mentioned just now?"

Are these unique terms used within the Demon Lord Army?

"I finally understand why we lost so many times. So this group— No, *you*. You were the reason." Glaster stared at Allen, his rage from before gone without a trace.

"What's a Liberated?" Allen repeated. *Don't keep it to yourself; share it with the class.*

"And you don't know your own position, I see. However...things are completely different with a Liberated in the picture."

A heat haze sprang up around Glaster.

“Neftira! I’ll hold them here. Inform Lord Rehzal that a Liberated has shown up!”

“Wh— Understood, sir! Right away!”

Despite being taken by surprise, Neftira understood the command. And by the looks of things, Glaster was now willing to lay his life on the line.

“GO!”

“YES, SIR!”

Neftira, who had finished healing himself during Allen and Glaster’s talk, turned tail and fled as fast as he could. Allen would not have minded if he had run away at the start, but the situation had changed.

Oh no, that’s not good.

Without further ado, Glaster began launching a full-out assault.

“Krena, use your Extra Skill now!”

“Okay, got it!”

Krena enveloped herself in a heat haze as well and swung her greatsword at Glaster. An ominous darkness burst out from his own weapon as he used it to deflect her strike.

“And you are a Sword Lord. Impressive.”

Glaster was doing all he could to reach Allen, and Krena was doing all she could to stop him. Their respective weapons clashed again and again. Even though Krena had activated Limit Break, Glaster still appeared to have the advantage in stats.

So even Krena can’t do this alone... Wow, Neftira sure is quick on his feet.

By now, Neftira had already run far away. Allen would have gone after him if not for Glaster standing smack dab in his way, and it was taking Krena everything she had just to match the demon’s speed. With no other choice, Allen tried sending a few Summons to attack Neftira but stopping a healer endlessly healing himself proved beyond their capabilities. Before long, Neftira

had completely disappeared from sight.

Figuring that he had lost his window of interception, Allen gave up the chase and decided to focus solely on fighting with Glaster. Now that the demon had lost all means of recovery and was getting whaled on by all the No-life Gamers, it did not take long before he collapsed to the ground.

Before breathing his last, he wheezed, “Ha ha ha, we win. Death is all that awaits you now. If this is all the strength you have, you won’t last a second against Lord Rehzal.”

Still smirking triumphantly, Glaster dissolved into dust.

<You have defeated 1 archdemon. You have earned 32,000,000 XP. Your XP has reached 10,000,000,000/10,000,000,000. You have reached Lv1. 65. Your HP has increased by 50. Your MP has increased by 80. Your Attack has increased by 28. Your Endurance has increased by 28. Your Agility has increased by 52. Your Intelligence has increased by 80. Your Luck has increased by 52. You have unsealed Deputize.>

Oh! I can finally use Deputize!

“What’re we gonna do about the one that got away?” Cecil asked as she walked up to Allen. She looked at the direction he had run off in, which also happened to be the same direction where Fortenia, the elven capital, lay.

“Well, there’s no point crying over spilled milk. All right, let’s change gears. Looks like the elves have finished taking over the walls. Let’s help with finishing off the monsters still left in the fortress.”

After that, the No-life Gamers regrouped with the forces coming down from the walls and participated in the cleanup operation. With Glaster gone, the monsters had regressed to terrified husks of themselves and posed no threat whatsoever. By sunset, Allen and the elves had finished up, having seized complete control of Castle Lapolka.

At the same time, Neftira was still making a mad dash for Fortenia. Suddenly, he heard a woman's voice calling out to him from behind. He turned around and found the girl who had been serving him tea in the fortress desperately trying to catch up, pushing herself hard while floating above the ground. Neftira stopped to wait for her, still casting Healing Magic on himself despite being out of breath.

When Ellie reached him, she smiled, saying, "I cannot allow someone of Lord Neftira's station to travel alone; the danger is much too grave."

Neftira was so touched by her words that he immediately allowed her to travel with him.

Chapter 11: Overflowing Prayer

“An elven force of 50,000 has defeated 300,000 monsters and succeeded in recapturing Castle Lapolka.”

The good news spread throughout the cities like wildfire thanks to the Spirit Bs. Upon hearing of what could only be a miracle, all the elves thanked the Sovereign of Spirits profusely and prayed for peace and the longevity of their queen.

This battle served as the end of one chapter of this war, but there was still much left to be done. Because the Demon Lord Army had likely been expecting to be besieged, the bulk of the forces dispatched to Castle Lapolka had been of the undead variety that did not require food, such as skeletons and suits of armor. Some could still be concealed within the compound, and leaving them to their devices for days, months, or even years would obviously be a problem. As such, squads of scouts with detection abilities were working in concert with Allen’s inexhaustible Summons to go through the entire fortress with a fine-tooth comb.

At the same time, the No-life Gamers decided to return to Tiamo, leaving Field Marshal Lukdraal and the other generals behind in Lapolka. The front lines were important, but so was discussing future plans with the queen and the generals still with her. As such, Allen’s group planned on using their Bird B’s Jet to head back that night.

Allen had been in the middle of considering whether to have Cecil or Volmaar ride with him when Krena had asked if she could join him instead. She apparently had something she wanted to talk about with him in private. This was why she was now riding behind him.

“I’m sorry, Allen.”

“For what?”

“If I knew how to use my Extra Skill properly, then the demons wouldn’t have

found out about you.”

Oh, so that's why she's looking so down.

“I wouldn't be so sure,” he replied. “In that situation, even if you had been able to use your skills, Neftira just might have gotten away regardless.”

Considering how fast the demon had run as well as his ability to continuously cast Healing Magic on himself, killing him would have been nigh impossible. At the time, ordering the Summons fighting alongside the elves to go chase after Neftira would have meant leaving the elves to die. Most importantly, Glaster had proven far more powerful than any Rank A monster once he activated his Extra Skill. If Allen had taken off to pursue Neftira himself, at least one of his companions would have ended up dying to Glaster's blade.

“In the first place...” Allen continued.

“Yes?”

“I managed to have one Ellie to accompany Neftira. I'm pretty sure he'll let her meet Demonic Deity Rehzal.”

Just in case, Allen checked the vision he was Sharing with the Ellie in question. Sure enough, she was currently hurrying toward Fortenia with Neftira at a blistering pace.

“I...see.”

“Y'know, it brings a tear to your teacher's eye to hear you thinking about things like this.”

“Allennnn!” Krena reached over the boy's shoulders to knead his cheeks.

“I'm joking, I'm joking! And you know what? Sometimes, running away just like how Neftira did is the right thing to do.”

“What? Running away is the right thing to do? Not doing my best and staying to fight?”

“Yep. Even I run away if I ever encounter an opponent that I can't figure out. Standing your ground isn't necessarily the only way to fight.”

The way Allen saw it, there was no way to guarantee that he would be able to

beat all his opponents the first time he met them. If they turned out to be someone beyond him, even in spite of his best efforts to increase his odds of winning, then he would not hesitate to withdraw. Allen explained all this to Krena while recalling how he had focused solely on fleeing from the assassin Dagrah during Cecil's kidnapping incident.

"I see..."

This was apparently quite a lot to take in for Krena, who had always approached everything head-on. Even so, she had her head cocked as she did her best to digest what Allen had said.

My info would've been leaked sooner or later. And in exchange, we gleaned pretty important info too. Turns out the demons can also use Extra Skills. The Sovereign of Spirits surely knows about that, right?

Realizing it had been quite a long time since they had last done so, Allen and Krena enjoyed the rest of the flight chatting alone. Thanks to Jet, they all arrived back in Tiamo that night. However, the queen and the generals had all gone to bed by that point, so the report would have to wait until the next day.

And so the thoroughly exhausted No-life Gamers stumbled into bed and enjoyed a deep slumber for the first time in ages.

* * *

When the No-life Gamers woke up, they were promptly escorted to the dining hall. The group enjoyed a breakfast that, despite growing fancier by the day, still had the very mild flavors characteristic of elven fare. Afterward, they headed to the queen's chamber where they found her all smiles.

"Good morning. Did you sleep well?"

"Good morning, Your Majesty," Allen replied. "Thank you, we slept wonderfully."

The other generals were also in top spirits. Everyone still seemed giddy about the recapture of Castle Lapolka. Rohzen, as usual, was fast asleep on the queen's lap.

Talk about oversleeping. Speaking of which, it's been quite a while since I've

seen him awake.

Allen felt a little embarrassed at all the gratitude the elves were heaping on him. He had been thanked quite a few times before in Krena Village and Granvelle City, and it always made him somewhat uncomfortable. The sole motivation for everything he had done so far was because he thought it needed to be done, not because he wanted to be treated like a hero. In the same vein, he was only lending his aid this time because the people of Rohzenheim needed it.

Seeing that it was about time, Allen kicked off the meeting. “By recapturing Castle Lapolka in such a short time, we’ve gained a bit of leeway in preparing for the arrival of the Demon Lord Army’s four million reserves. According to my intel, the group striking the north has only just landed on the continent. Even they will need at least two or three days to reach Castle Lapolka. Maybe even more. The forces coming by sea will likely make contact at around the same time.”

“What welcome news!” The generals exclaimed in awe once again.

The queen leaned forward. “What do you suggest we do now?”

“The way I see it, there are two main things.” *Um, it’s starting to feel like I’m calling all the shots here. You guys sure you want this?*

When Allen first came to Rohzenheim, he thought he would be merely cooperating with the elves’ resistance efforts, most likely in the capacity of a mobile strike unit. Now, however, he was even suggesting tactics—that were being approved!—to the nation’s ruler and top military personnel. He suppressed the twinge of discomfort in his chest and proceeded to share his thoughts.

First, they needed to regain full control of the lands south of Castle Lapolka. It was a large area with a number sizable settlements, several of which had fallen to the Demon Lord Army. It would be a problem if the monsters still stationed at those settlements were to band together, so it made perfect sense to finish them off now.

Second, they had to move their main base of operations to Lapolka. This meant sending 300,000 troops to the fortress to shore it up, which would push

the front line northward from Tiamo.

“However, what should we do about the force heading toward Nest?” the queen asked anxiously.

“We’ll take care of that ourselves. Just in case any do get past us, however, let’s keep 100,000 in the city.”

To sum up what Allen was saying, of the 600,000 troops at the elves’ command, 300,000 ought to be stationed at Castle Lapolka and 100,000 at Nest. Considering how forces of three million and one million monsters would be attacking from the north and south respectively, both cities would be facing ten times their numbers. The remaining 200,000 elves were to be distributed between Tiamo and other cities for protection’s sake.

The queen mulled over Allen’s suggestion. No matter the strategy, elves were still going to die. She did not have much of a choice, but this was still a difficult decision to make.

There’s no helping the fact that it’s gonna be a tough fight. What’s it gonna be? I wanna get outta here and check out Deputize as soon as possible. Gotta figure out how to incorporate it into the way I fight.

The northernmost fortress of Rohzenheim had fallen to a force of three million. The monsters had gotten in even though the fortress had walls twice as tall as those of Lapolka. And now, the elves would have to fend off the same number but with shorter walls, all while dealing with another force attacking from the sea.

Fingers crossed that Deputize turns out even more useful than Quick Summoning. What it does could possibly really change up the strategy I use.

Given everything that had been said, the queen thanked Allen once again. “Thank you for everything, Lord Allen. The war is not over yet, but the successive victories over these past few days have greatly lifted our people’s spirits.”

“The victories were thanks to everyone working together. Speaking of which—I heard something at Castle Lapolka that’s been bothering me. May I ask if you’ve heard of it?”

“We would love to be of help.”

“The demons called me a ‘Liberated.’ Has anyone here heard the term ‘Liberated’ before?”

Both the queen and the generals looked at a loss. It was not ringing any bells for them.

Would the Sovereign of Spirits know? Would he wake up if I call out to him?

Just as Allen was about to call out to him, the flying squirrel that had been sleeping splayed out on his back suddenly began to shine brightly and said, “Everyone, thank you for all your prayers. The time has come.”

“What?!” A commotion went up.

Oh? What’s this? What’s going on? Is something starting?

“L-Lord Rohzen, do you mean...?”

“That’s right, descendant of the Priestess of Prayer. I almost have the amount of prayers I need. It’s happening quite a bit earlier than expected thanks to that young man over there giving me the credit for his achievements multiple times. Ha ha.”

Still glowing, the Sovereign of Spirits slowly began floating in midair.

Giving him credit? When did I do that? Allen racked his brain but could not think of what Rohzen was referring to.

With large tears rolling down her cheeks, the queen asked, “Are you finally becoming the God of Spirits?”

“That’s right,” Rohzen replied. “Very soon, I shall become the God of Spirits. Back then, I never would’ve imagined this day would come. It really isn’t easy seeing one’s own future. Ha ha.” He slowly descended back into the queen’s lap, still glowing.

The queen, generals, Sophie, and Volmaar were all shedding tears of joy.

Uh, should I be crying too? I can’t follow at all. Allen was thoroughly bewildered at what was happening. He had planned on asking Rohzen what he knew about the term “Liberated,” but he was apparently occupied with being

promoted from the Sovereign of Spirits to the God of Spirits right now. *Guess I'll have to ask when he wakes up next.*

* * *

After giving Sophie and Volmaar a bit more time to calm down, Allen left the audience chamber with his party. Using Bird Bs, they then headed to a location halfway between Tiamo and Lapolka.

Today, Allen was back to riding with Cecil. There were still tens of thousands of Demon Lord Army stragglers roaming about to the south of Castle Lapolka. The idea was to wipe them all out while testing Deputize.

In regard to the Demon Lord Army's upcoming two-pronged attack, Allen planned on leaving the elves to fend off the three million themselves as his party fought the one million coming by sea. The last time, they had only managed to kill 400,000 over three days, but they would have to annihilate all one million this time before the monsters reached Nest. In preparation for such a demanding fight, Allen was now exploring the capabilities of his new skill.

Cecil was also very curious about Allen's new skill. "I wonder what it does..."

Allen shrugged. "All I know is that it should be more useful than Quick Summoning."

Someone in Normal Mode could only reach Lvl. 60 and raise their skills to Lvl. 6 max. When Allen reached Summoning Lvl. 7, effectively surpassing the limits of Normal Mode, he had obtained two skills: Quick Summoning and Deputize. He could use the former right off the bat, but the latter had remained sealed all this time. It was only after he defeated Glaster and reached Lvl. 65 that it had finally become available.

Skills could be sealed due to a variety of requirements, such as level, skill level, and stats. This time, it was level. This made a lot of sense to Allen thanks to all the games he had played in his previous life, and he also knew that the higher the requirements, the better the skill would be.

Name: Allen

Age: 14

Class: Summoner

Level: 65

HP: 1,765

MP: 2,780 + 1,000 (Ring)

Attack: 976

Endurance: 976 + 1,300

Agility: 1,819 + 560

Intelligence: 2,790 + 1,860

Luck: 1,819

Skills: Summoning {7}, Creation {7}, Synthesis {7},
Strengthening {7}, Awakening {7}, Expansion {6}, Storage,
Sharing, Quick Summoning, Deputize, Deletion, Sword Mastery
{3}, Throwing {3}

XP: 9,089,285/20,000,000,000

Skill Levels

Summoning: 7

Creation: 7

Synthesis: 7

Strengthening: 7

Awakening: 7

Skill Experience

Creation: 7,833,218/1,000,000,000

Synthesis: 7,756,875/1,000,000,000

Strengthening: 271,264,760/1,000,000,000

Awakening: 12,765,800/1,000,000,000

Creatable Summons

Insect: B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Beast: B, C, D, E, F, G, H

Bird: B, C, D, E, F, G

Grass: B, C, D, E, F

Stone: B, C, D, E

Fish: B, C, D

Spirit: B, C

Dragon: B

Holder

Insect:

Beast:

Bird: E x 6, B x 5

Grass:

Stone:

Fish:

Spirit: B x 13

Dragon:

Allen is wearing a +1,000 MP ring and an MP Recovery Ring.

Since his fight with the Demon Lord Army was approaching, Allen had emptied his card holders for the moment.

Now that I think back, it's already been four months since I fought Helmios. I've gone up ten levels and earned more than three hundred million XP since then. There's still such a long way to go.

Allen checked his Status every morning, afternoon, and evening, despite knowing there would be no change. His stats had, for the most part, gone up by the same amount every time he leveled up, but that amount had doubled ever since he reached Lvl. 61. This was most likely due to having surpassed the realm of Normal Mode.

Thanks to his MP Recovery Ring, he could now earn Skill XP without needing to purchase magic stones from the Adventurer's Guild. He was still keeping it up, however, as he saw no need to give up the edge that having so many stones gave him.

There had been no change to his policy of leveling up Strengthening before his other class skills. Strengthening was useful no matter the Summon and gave Allen a very significant boost. Conversely, raising Awakening would not gain him access to Rank A Summons, so he was putting it off for last. However, he had

been making two thousand Blessings of Heaven each day ever since he came to Rohzenheim twenty days ago, so he had actually had more opportunity to use Awakening than Strengthening.

Hmm, even after being unsealed, Deputize still isn't listed under Skill Experience. That means that it only does one thing and probably won't cost MP to use.

There had been other skills so far, such as Storage and Sharing, that similarly had a set effect that did not use MP. All signs pointed to Deputize being the same.

Understanding that there was no further point in mere speculation, Allen stopped the Bird B he was riding, making it hover in the sky. "Hold on, let me try Deputize on Hawkins real quick."

"All right," Cecil replied.

Allen used Deputize the moment the Summon appeared next to him, but nothing happened. "Huh? Did it not work?"

"Looks the same to me."

Wondering if it had been an effect invisible to the eye, Allen checked his grimoire. In situations like these, there would usually be an entry in the log on the front cover. And sure enough, a new line in silver text had appeared.

<Deputize can only be used on Rank B Summons.>

"That's strange. It says it only works on Rank B Summons," Allen murmured.

"Oh, you're right." Despite being hundreds of meters up in the sky and not being secured by any safety measures, Cecil still grabbed Allen from behind to peer over his shoulder.

"Hmm... Okay, then. Dora, come out."

"What's the matter, Master? It doesn't look like a fight..." The Dragon B looked around.

"I'm gonna use my new skill on you."

“Be my guest.”

Allen tried using Deputize again. “How is it?”

Just as Allen was about to look back down at his grimoire, a shock wave burst out from Dora, making Allen and Cecil scream in surprise. The same thing soon happened to their companions.

“What is... *OHHHH!* Th-The power! I feel so much more powerful now! I...I have become a General!”

The Dragon B’s form had doubled in size, growing from ten to twenty meters in length from head to tail. Its muscles had bulged and become firmer as its horns and fangs had grown longer, giving it a decidedly more ferocious look.

Huh? What did Dora mean by becoming a general?

Still surprised, Allen checked his grimoire and noticed a new page. He read through it while suppressing his wildly beating heart.

Type: Dragon
Position: General
Rank: B
Name: Dora
HP: 5,600
MP: 2,000
Attack: 6,000
Endurance: 5,800
Agility: 6,000
Intelligence: 3,600
Luck: 3,200
Bufs: Attack 100, Agility 100, High Breath Damage Resistance
Ability: Fire Breath, Recruit
Awakened Ability: Hellfire of Fury

“Wow! Not only did it get bigger, its stats doubled too. It’s now strong enough to fight toe to toe with Rank A monsters.”

As Allen closely combed through the Dragon B’s Status, he noticed the word “Recruit” that had been added in the Ability field.

“Dora, you got a new skill named Recruit. What’s it do?”

“Hm? Ahh, I believe...”

Apparently the Summon instinctively understood how to use the skill. It explained that “Recruit” was a skill for him to use on other Summons of his kind, but that simply led to the question of what Recruit did.

“In that case...lemme Summon another Dora.”

“Sounds good, Master.”

Allen materialized another Dragon B and told the first one to use Recruit on the new one. The change was immediate.

“Whoa, this one got bigger too!”

“Incredible!”

As it turned out, the Recruited Summon had gotten fifty percent bigger. Its stats had also gone up proportionally.

Type: Dragon
Position: Soldier
Rank: B
Name: Dora
HP: 4,200
MP: 1,500
Attack: 4,500
Endurance: 4,350
Agility: 4,500
Intelligence: 2,700
Luck: 2,400
Buffs: Attack 100, Agility 100, High Breath Damage

Resistance

Ability: Fire Breath

Awakened Ability: Hellfire of Fury

Okay, everything makes sense now. The Deputize skill installs a General and gives it the authority to create Soldiers.

Allen was starting to catch the gist of the skill. Of course, it would be best if he could give all his Summons the General position, but he doubted the gods would make him that overpowered.

“This skill seems like it’d come in really helpful. I’ll need to analyze it a bit more.”

“I thought you’d say that.”

And so Allen continued trying to explore this new skill.

* * *

After a certain amount of experimentation, Allen had written up his observations in his grimoire.

Findings Regarding Deputize

- This skill cannot be used on Summons more than 50 meters away.
- After this skill is used on a Summon, it can be deactivated from more than 50 meters away if Allen is Sharing with it.
- Only one individual from each type can be Deputized at any given time.
- This skill costs no MP to use.

Findings Regarding Recruit

- There is no limit to how many Soldiers a General can

Recruit.

- Generals can only Recruit other Summons of the same type.
- The Soldier position is revoked when a Summon is more than 100 meters from its General.

This actually seems pretty similar to Sharing. Hmm, so Soldiers have to stay close to the General. This is the biggest limitation to this skill. Wait, what would happen to Lil Antsys, then?

Cecil watched Allen with warm eyes as he continued to fully immerse himself in analysis. She recalled him acting the exact same way when they were going through a dungeon and he had reached Summoning Lvl. 6. In a way he reminded her of her brother, Thomas, back when he first received a sword from their father and had swung it enthusiastically whenever he had a spare moment.

“There’s some stuff I wanna confirm. Cecil, do you mind if I try putting the skill into practice?!” Allen whirled around, his eyes sparkling.

Cecil smiled wryly. “All right, go ahead.”

The other No-life Gamers also gestured to convey their permission from atop their respective griffins.

In the end, Allen ended up making his friends wait a full hour. By “putting the skill in practice,” he had meant attacking the several tens of thousands of monsters in the area. He used Bird E to scout out a group of monsters gathered into a big group, then made a beeline to them. Cecil first thinned them out using her Petit Meteor, throwing them into disarray. Then Allen sent in the Lil Antsys affected by Deputize that he had been so curious about.

I see, so the Lil Antsys created by General Antsy, Soldier Antsys, and normal Antsys all differ in size and stats. And I can’t use Deputize directly on Lil Antsys.

The grimoire made it clear exactly what the difference in the stat values were.

Size and Stat Comparison for Lil Antsys Spawned by Antsys

Affected By Deputize (with a normal Antsy being 100)

- Antsy: 100
- Soldier Antsy: 150
- General Antsy: 200
- Antsy's Lil Antsy: 50
- Soldier Antsy's Lil Antsy: 75
- General Antsy's Lil Antsy: 100

"Your Deputize skill is incredible," Cecil marveled, noting the marked rise in fighting strength of the large ants below. "It makes your Summons a whole lot stronger."

The amount of damage dealt by the Abilities of the Beast-type and Dragon-type Summons depended on their Attack stat. The difference in performance between normal individuals and those given the General and Soldier positions was stark to witness, especially when they spammed their Abilities.

"Now I finally feel like we might have a way to deal with the Demon Lord Army's reserves." Just as Allen made that comment, his attention was suddenly drawn by the field of vision of the Spirit B who was accompanying Neftira. "Hold on."

"What happened?"

"Ellie's about to reach Fortenia."

Ellie and Neftira were coming upon a massive walled city. After traveling for almost a full day without rest, the pair had finally arrived at Fortenia, the capital of Rohzenheim.

If I remember right, that's the World Tree, right? So this is what it means for something to "touch the sky."

As he observed the colossal tree towering over the entire city through the Spirit B's eyes, Allen recalled what Sophie had told him about the World Tree. It was an object of the elves' worship alongside the Sovereign of Spirits and their queen. Supposedly, this tree even birthed new spirits.

Just as Allen was musing on how much the elves prayed, Neftira and Ellie

walked into a huge building. They proceeded straight inside, climbed a flight of stairs, then arrived at a spacious hall on the second floor. By the looks of it, this was supposed to be the queen's audience chamber, which made this building the temple where the elves venerated her and the Sovereign of Spirits.

At the far end of the hall stood a throne. And someone was sitting on it.

So this is Demonic Deity Rehzal.

The man was lounging with a fist propping up his chin, looking every inch a boss. He had dark skin like Glaster and Neftira, vicious-looking horns protruding from his head, and blazing bloodred eyes.

"Lord Rehzal, your servant Neftira has just returned," the younger demon announced reverently as he knelt a slight distance away from the throne.

Ellie followed suit from her position diagonally behind Neftira as Rehzal wordlessly studied his two guests.

Unable to bear the silence any longer, Neftira started apologizing profusely, "I'm v-very sorry, Lord Rehzal. We lost both the army and the fortress that you so graciously bestowed upon us. We have failed y—"

However, Rehzal raised a hand, cutting Neftira off. Despite being surprised, Neftira obediently fell silent and bowed his head.

Rehzal inhaled solemnly, then spoke. "I see. So you lost. I had wondered how it could be, despite all the forces plus the impregnable fortress I left in Glaster's care. Turns out the reason is right here."

He already knows that they lost Castle Lapolka? I thought we had taken care of all the eyeball bats. Do the demons have another method of communication?

Allen was doing his best to glean whatever information he could on the Demon Lord Army through Rehzal's words.

"The reason is here'...?" Neftira quivered with fear. "Y-Yes, my lord, it was our fault that we lost—"

"It is indeed your fault," Rehzal interrupted. "Turns out my subordinates are quite the fools. To think you cannot tell even when a rat is in your midst."

Every single word Rehzal uttered was loaded with intimidation, shaking the

walls of the temple.

“A...rat, my lord?”

“Indeed.” Rehzal turned to look at Ellie. “You—who are you?”

What? Is the jig up?

“My name is Ellie, my lord.”

“Not shaken in the slightest despite your situation, I see. You have been raised well. So, what are you, if not monster, demon, or spirit?”

Ahhh, he’s completely seen through her. That was way too fast. What a pity.

“What?! E-Ellie is a rat?!” Neftira whirled around, directing disbelieving eyes at Spirit B.

As Neftira and Rehzal watched, Ellie slowly stood and floated up to where she could look down on the two.



“Turns out there’s one among you with half a brain. I am Ellie, a Summon belonging to Lord Allen.”

Wait, what’re you saying?! Did you just give my name?!

“Well, that’s quite the insolent attitude you’re taking.”

“Oh, no, this is quite the correct attitude to take. After all, I am a subordinate of the man who holds the world in his hands.”

“The world, you say?”

Who, me? Hold the world in my hands? Since when?

Paying no mind to Allen’s protest, Ellie continued, “Indeed. This entire world belongs to Lord Allen. Rehzal, with whose permission do you claim the inflated title of ‘Demonic Deity’? Have you asked Lord Allen?”

“The world belongs to him now? So this Allen has characters like you under his command.”

“Character?! How dare a mere Demonic Deity say such a thing of a servant of Lord Allen?!” Ellie cried, her voice quivering with more anger than she had ever expressed.

“A ‘mere’ Demonic Deity. Hmm. Well, I think that’s enough from you. You may disappear now.” Rehzal shot a crimson ball of energy at Ellie from the palm of his hand. The Summon faded into bubbles of light and the feed that Allen was watching through Sharing was cut.

“How could it be...?” Neftira lamented. “Ellie was an enemy spy this whole time? Because of our negligence, the enemy now knows all about us and our strategies!”

“Likely so. However, there is no point dwelling on past mistakes. You have information on this Allen, do you not?”

“Y-Yes, my lord.”

Rehzal wordlessly stared at the fading bubbles. As Neftira apprehensively peered at his superior’s face, attempting to glean his emotions, the Demonic Deity suddenly burst into hearty laughter.

“HA HA HA! A ‘mere’ Demonic Deity!”

Neftira nearly fell on his rear from surprise. This was the first time he had ever seen a Demonic Deity laugh.

“It has been a hundred years since someone last said that to me. How amusing! Ha ha ha! I see, so that’s what it was. A Liberated has appeared!”

Rehzel’s laughter reverberated throughout the audience chamber as Neftira looked on, shocked at the word “Liberated” having come from his superior’s mouth.

Chapter 12: The History of Light and Darkness

The three days following the recapturing of Castle Lapolka were all spent hunting down stragglers of the Demon Lord Army. Today, the No-life Gamers were back in Tiamo after a full day of fighting for another strategy meeting with the elven queen and her generals.

They were quite hungry by the time they landed, but they prioritized the meeting over dinner regardless and headed straight for the audience chamber. There, the Sovereign of Spirits was still sleeping in the queen's lap, shining brightly. In fact, he had been asleep the entire time since what had occurred the other day.

Look at him, still completely conked out. Is this like a chrysalis state for becoming the God of Spirits? When the time comes, will he transform or something?

Allen turned his gaze to meet the queen's and gave his report as usual. The Grand Marshal Siguul replied on her behalf.

"Those were quite the numbers again today."

"Yes, sir. I think we are getting close to not having to worry about being pincerred from both the north and the south. I'll mark the locations that we cleared today after this meeting, so please assist with the gathering of the magic stones."

"Of course. We appreciate your good work."

The elven army's scouts were tasked with harvesting not only magic stones but also the monsters' weapons and any parts of their corpses that could be used as crafting materials. The weapons would bolster their armory while the materials would bolster their coffers. In exchange for Allen getting the majority of the magic stones, Rohzenheim got to keep everything else.

Allen continued, "I have a bit of bad news: the Demon Lord Army has moved their schedule forward. They're almost on Castle Lapolka. You'll have to step up

transporting troops to the fortress. My companions will help in any way they can.”

“Hm? Your companions? Meaning you...”

“Yes, I will be intercepting the force heading to Nest. They’re not as numerous, and I think I have a way to take care of them by myself.”

Thanks to all the Bird Es he had deployed everywhere, Allen knew the exact whereabouts of the two prongs of the Demon Lord Army at that moment. When the demons realized that the elves had caught on to their strategy, they suddenly kicked up the speed of their preparations. Judging by the directions the forces were marching in, however, it seemed that there had been no change in their plan to attack Lapolka and Nest.

Allen’s declaration that he would face the monster host approaching Nest alone left Grand Marshal Siguul and the generals dumbstruck with surprise. They looked to the boy’s companions and found, to their further consternation, that not one of them moved to stop him. The No-life Gamers simply stood up straight and continued looking at the queen, their expressions unchanged.

Back when he finished analyzing Deputize, Allen had already told his friends what he would be doing. The rest of the Gamers would be joining the 300,000 elves fighting against the three million monsters attacking Castle Lapolka while Allen would take care of the one million on the ocean by himself. After sending most of its troops to Tiamo, Nest only had 100,000 soldiers and therefore did not have the ability to mount a significant defense. As such, the monsters must not be allowed to even approach the city. This left Allen no other choice but to take care of the one million monsters alone.

“We’ll be leaving tomorrow morning.”

All the elves present looked the No-life Gamers in the eyes and decided to bet on Allen’s strategy once more.

“I see. Let me know if there’s anything you need,” Grand Marshal Siguul said as a token of appreciation.

Without hesitating, Allen took him up on his offer. “Thank you very much, Grand Marshal. In that case, if you could please prepare some food for us to

bring on the road—all the cuisine in this country is simply delicious. Additionally, there is one thing I want to confirm before we leave. May I?”

All I have so far is purely speculation. I wonder how this would turn out?

“Mm? Of course. Ask us anything.”

“After arriving in Rohzenheim and fighting alongside the elves, there are two things that I’ve learned about your culture. For confirmation’s sake, Grand Marshal, your name is Siguul, yes?”

“Uh, yes. Why?” Siguul looked bewildered as to why Allen was asking about his name.

Allen started counting with his fingers: “Princess Sophialohne, Volmaar, Field Marshal Lukdraal, Sir Gatoluuga, And you, Grand Marshal Siguul—all of your names have a long vowel. And come to think of it, the name of the Sovereign of Spirits is Rohzen. Is this a coincidence?”

“Er, well, that’s just how our names have always been, down through the generations. We’ve always named our children so,” Siguul answered, completely in the dark as to where Allen was going with this line of questioning. The other generals and even Allen’s own companions looked mystified as well.

“Thank you for answering. Now, there’s one more person in our party who is currently back in her home country—a dwarf named Meruru. Her father’s name is Neneku and her mother’s is Kanana. I guess that goes to show that different cultures really do use names with distinctive characteristics.”

“I...suppose so?” Siguul was still confused, but he did concede that different countries had differing customs when it came to names.

“May I ask one more thing?”

“O-Of course. Um, did my answer to your previous question suffice?”

“Yes it did, thank you very much. Now, my other question. It’s coming up on sixty years since the war with the Demon Lord Army began. And Rohzenheim’s northernmost fortress is supposedly nigh unassailable and an architectural marvel.”

“Indeed, it has served us well for decades. Well, until recently, that is.”

“The Demon Lord Army attacked, so the northernmost fortress was built. This I understand. However, I’ve heard that Castle Lapolka, which is located south of Fortenia, was erected by a Grand Spirit User who appeared long, long ago. And now, here is my question: Why did the elves of the distant past build this castle? More importantly, who were they fighting?”

This question seemed so unrelated to a military meeting regarding the Demon Lord Army’s invasion that it evoked a perplexed chorus of “Huh?!” around the room.

“What do you mean by...why?” Siguul parroted back Allen’s question as he struggled to wrap his mind around the topic.

“Exactly as it sounds,” Allen replied. “During my time in the Academy, I learned the geography and history of other countries. According to my lessons, Rohzenheim has been peaceful for the past thousand years, having never been attacked by any other nation.”

Though admittedly, the Academy is run by the Five Continent Alliance, of which Rohzenheim is a major influence, and our headmaster was also related to the Rohzenheim royal family by blood. So I wouldn’t be surprised if there were dark parts of Rohzenheim’s history that were kept from our curriculum.

Almost all Allen had learned about Rohzenheim was about its system of government, its culture, its main industries, and the names and locations of its major settlements.

Unable to bear it any longer, the queen cut in. “Um...Lord Allen, what is your intention with these questions? I fail to see your point.”

“I’m very sorry for doing this in such a roundabout way. However, please humor me a while longer. It is true that I first came here because I was ordered to by the king of Ratash, my home country. However, I only think of his decree as the impetus. Now, I fight in order to protect Sophie and the peace-loving citizens of this country.”

“And for which, we are thankful from the bottom of our hearts,” the queen replied. “As you say, we elves do love peace and abhor war.”

Allen nodded in acknowledgment. “Now I am getting to what I really want to

ask. The name of the chief commander of the Demon Lord Army currently attacking Rohzenheim is Rehzal. Does anyone here recognize this name? It seems to bear the same characteristics that normal elven names do.”

“The same characteristics as our—” The queen’s face paled. “Wait, you mean...”

“From what I saw through my Summon’s eyes, Demonic Deity Rehzal has dark skin and a ghastly appearance with horns and fangs. However, I also took note of his long ears and calm manner of speech, and a ‘what if’ arose in my mind.”

Judging by memories from his previous life, those long ears definitely indicated an elf. It was only when he worked backward that Allen noticed the fact that Rehzal’s name followed elven naming conventions. Of course, “Yagof” and “Neftira” did not have long vowels whereas “Keel” did, and each country on the Central Continent also had its own unique characteristics when it came to names.

The noise level in the audience chamber rose by a decibel as Allen’s companions also exchanged looks. He had not discussed this with them yet either.

Sophie asked, “Lord Allen, what is the ‘what if’ that you were thinking?”

Allen looked at her for a brief moment, then turned back to the queen. “Your Majesty, have my companions and I become complicit in a conflict between elves? Is that man... Is Demonic Deity Rehzal also an elf? If so, would anything come to mind regarding a motive that he, someone of the same race, would have for attacking Rohzenheim?”

Even the Central Continent has a history of countries expelling certain demographics from their borders.

Allen had learned the history of the Central Continent while in the Academy, and he knew that not everything that happened in the past had been sunshine and roses. He was now suspecting that this current war with the Demon Lord Army had its roots in an interracial conflict between elves.

* * *

Allen had been born into a village of only humans and for a while, he had only

encountered humans in his life. It was only when Cecil's magic tutor taught him Demon Lord history at the Granvelle mansion that Allen had learned that other races, like the ones described in novels from his past life, also lived in this world—specifically, there were elves and dwarves who lived on the Northeast and Northwest Continents respectively. During his second year at the Academy, he had further learned in geography class that the Southwest Continent was home to beastkin nations while the Southeast Continent was jointly governed by allied nations. This was when Allen first caught a glimpse of the dark side of this world.

The beastkin had come to occupy the Southwest Continent after fleeing the severe discrimination they faced on the Central Continent—especially from the Empire of Giamut—a thousand years ago. The general narrative of the time was that beastkin were the mixed-blooded descendants of monsters, making them targets of persecution. This was why it was almost impossible to find a beastkin on the Central Continent anymore.

Similarly, the ancestors of the Southeast Continent people had also lost their place on the Central Continent. The Southeastern countries had started off as penal colonies formed by Giamutan nobles who had lost their standing due to political machinations as well as criminals of all sorts. There were others still who had faced undue discrimination for their atypical appearances, such as merfolk and birdkin. Each of these groups formed their own small nations, so there was no singular nation that dominated the Southeast Continent, unlike the other continents. Instead, the leader of their continental organization, the Union, was elected by a council of representatives from each member nation.

Given this history, although the beastkin nations and the Union also had seats at the Five Continent Alliance, they were somewhat looked down on by the other three continents. Taking offense at this treatment, the two southern continents were quite reserved in their support for the war with the Demon Lord Army, sending only supplies but no troops.

This was all the more blatant when it came to Giamut's fight against the Army. The southern continents only sent the bare minimum required by the Alliance charter, preferring instead to take a step back and allow the situation to take its course. If the beastkin, who specialized in close-quarters combat,

joined the fray, the war effort would be greatly bolstered, but that was not going to happen because of this deep-seated schism between the various continents.

* * *

Cecil, who had taken the same classes Allen had, quickly caught on to what he was getting at. “A-Allen, but if this is a battle between elves, why are there elves in the Demon Lord Army in the first place?”

“That’s what I don’t know.” Allen shook his head. “But the elves here—”

The queen looked up from being deep in thought, resolve shining in her eyes. “I’m not sure if this is relevant to what you’re asking, Lord Allen, but...may I?”

“Of course. After all, everything I’ve said so far has been only speculation.”

“First, let me say this: we elves had always hoped to live in harmony with the dark elves.”

“Dark elves,” huh? So we really are talking about an interracial conflict here.

What followed was an account of Rohzenheim’s history of light and darkness.

“Far in the past, there were two nations on this continent. One ruled by elves, and one ruled by dark elves.”

“And the two were always at war?”

“That is so. We elves always hoped for coexistence, but they did not. The dark elves specialized in Attack Magic and enjoyed battle. According to my predecessor, the wars were fierce beyond belief.”

The queen went on to describe the characteristics of dark elves: they had dark skin, and they were proficient at borrowing spirit power to deal magical damage. This happened to match the impression that Allen already had of dark elves and was a good description of Demonic Deity Rehzal as well.

“If the elves did not want to fight, why did the dark elves attack? Did they want to conquer the whole continent?”

“There is a giant tree that we call the World Tree at Fortenia, our capital. Both we and the dark elves worship this tree, as it gives birth to new spirits.

However, the dark elves wanted to keep it to themselves so badly that they tried to chase us from the continent. And so we fought for a long, long time.”

With a quivering voice, the queen told of how elven leaders had suggested a ceasefire and joint management time and again, only to be rebuffed by the dark elves at every turn. Everyone in the audience chamber listened closely to this narrative that had likely been passed down through Rohzenheim’s line of rulers.

When the queen was finished, Allen asked, “But there are no dark elves left in Rohzenheim, right? Did the elves wipe them out in the end?”

“In a way,” the queen said as she nodded quietly. “The conclusion was not one that we wished for. I was told that, at a time, we elves were almost on the verge of being wiped out. We did not have much of a choice in how we eventually dealt with the dark elves.”

After fighting for a long, long time, a brilliant leader had suddenly appeared among the dark elves and led them to consecutive victories over the elves. They seized settlements and fortresses one after another until only Fortenia remained in the elves’ possession. Convinced that they would be annihilated the very next day, the elves had prayed as one, begging the World Tree for salvation.

“Did the praying help?” As someone who had been an average Japanese guy in his previous life, Allen was rather unfamiliar with the concept of divine supplication.

“Yes, it did. As we prayed in desperation, my ancestor—the young girl who would go on to become the founding queen of Rohzenheim—discovered a young spirit emerging from a hollow in the World Tree. When she asked the spirit to save us, he replied, ‘Please give me a name.’”

“And that was Lord Rohzen?”

“Indeed. The girl named the spirit ‘Rohzen.’ In doing so, she forged a contract with him. We elves now call her ‘the Priestess of Prayer.’”

The other elves had been surprised when they watched the contract taking place, but they had not expected much from this young spirit. Generally, spirits needed time to grow in power, with some taking centuries or millennia to

become grand spirits. As such, the elves did not expect the forging of this contract to affect their immediate situation in any major way.

“However, Lord Rohzen *did* have the power to completely change the tide of battle, didn’t he?”

“He did. He transformed the Priestess of Prayer into a high elf, and that made all the difference.”

Right before the eyes of the other elves, the young girl’s eyes turned gold and her hair became silver, making her the very first high elf in history. Having gained the power to wipe out an entire dark elven host by herself, she had gone on to completely overturn the tide of the war.

Drawn in by the story, Allen asked, “What happened to the dark elves, then?”

“The Priestess of Prayer chased the dark elves to what’s modern-day Nest, then gave them an ultimatum. They could either stay after forming a Life Pact to never attack another elf again or they could leave the continent altogether.”

A Life Pact, huh. It forces you to comply regardless of your will, right? “Which did they choose?”

“The dark elves chose to leave Rohzenheim. That is how they became exiled.”

The dark elves boarded ships, every last one of them, and went to live on the Southeast Continent in exile, forbidden from ever returning to Rohzenheim. Considering this had happened a thousand years ago, the length of time that this conflict had spanned was one or two orders of magnitude beyond what Allen could comprehend.

I see. So when they were on the verge of annihilation, the elves were saved by the Sovereign of Spirits and the Priestess of Prayer, and the target of their worship then shifted from the World Tree to the Sovereign. However, the dark elves probably still worship the World Tree.

Allen thought back to his interactions with the elves and realized that he had almost never heard them mention the World Tree—whenever they prayed, it was always to the Sovereign of Spirits or their queen. Pretty much the only exception was when they talked about the Tree as the source of new spirits.

“Do you know anything about Demonic Deity Rehzal, then? For example, would it happen to be the name of someone in power among the dark elves?”

“I have subordinates looking into it at the moment. However, I can confirm that during the three hundred years I have been queen, the leader of the dark elves has always been King Olbaas. The name of his direct predecessor was not Rehzal either.”

“I...see.” Allen leaned back, looking somewhat disappointed.

“Um...” The queen slowly moved down from her throne, prompting cries of “You musn’t, Your Majesty!” from her generals. She ignored them, however, and prostrated herself in entreaty. “Lord Allen, we cannot win this war without you. Please lend us your strength!”

Allen’s expression seemed to indicate that he was having qualms about being involved in a fight between elves, but the queen was desperate for him to bring them to victory. Her actions left both elves and Gamers too shocked for words.

Allen was the only one who appeared unfazed. “Your Majesty, please lift your head. Don’t worry. I said I would help, and I’m not going back on my word.”

“Thank you.” As the queen continued expressing her heartfelt gratitude, Sophie and Volmaar hurried over to help her to her feet.

When the queen had regained her composure, Allen smiled and said, “All I know right now is that there is a Demonic Deity with slightly longer ears and a name that sounds elvish. None of that detracts from the fact that he’s a commander of the Demon Lord Army.”

In the first place, everything I have is mere speculation and hearsay. That said, I’m glad I now know all this.

With that, this account of the light and darkness in Rohzenheim’s history came to an end.

* * *

The next day, the No-life Gamers gathered in an open plaza inside Tiamo. Allen was about to head off on his own for the day, but before he did so, he would be stopping by Castle Lapolka to leave a few Summons behind.

“We’re glad for all your Summons, but are you sure you don’t need to keep the slots for yourself?” Cecil asked. She rarely sounded this worried.

“I think I’ll manage. And it’d be a waste to erase all these Antsys that I used Deputize on a few days ago. It’s not like they can fight on the ocean, after all.”

“I-I suppose so.”

The Demon Lord Army is coming at us for real this time. They’re sending literally everything they have left at Lapolka.

During their time on Rohzenheim, the No-life Gamers had killed nearly two million monsters in total. However, that left a million still roaming around. All of these numbers were being called north to regroup with the three million reserves approaching Castle Lapolka. As such, Allen was planning on leaving a few Strengthened Insect Bs at the fortress and using the rest of his card slots to destroy the force approaching Nest.

Suddenly, Allen shot a look at Dogora, who had been quite listless as of late. The reason was, of course, his Extra Skill. Krena had been struggling with her own Extra Skill, but not nearly as much as Dogora. He had failed to activate it even during the fight with Glaster the other day, and it was really getting to him.

“Dogora.”

“What?”

“I have very high hopes for your Extra Skill.”

“Wha—?! Dude!” Dogora looked decidedly uncomfortable at being put under even higher expectations.

“Based on the name, your Extra Skill probably expends all your MP in exchange for an incredibly powerful attack that can one-shot absolutely anything. Cecil’s Petit Meteor also uses up all her MP, but that skill deals damage over a large area. Yours is a single-target attack, and for that, I bet it deals even more damage than hers. That makes it literally the most powerful attack in our party’s arsenal.”

“Huh? Even more damage than Petit Meteor? Uh...are you sure?”

“One hundred percent. Your Extra Skill is definitely the ability to attack a single target using all your MP, all your heart, and all your soul. I’m counting on you to learn how to use it during this war. I don’t have an Extra Skill of my own, and I’m nowhere as strong as you think I am. I need every last drop of strength from everyone in this party, and that includes you. In the same way, everyone else needs your strength too.”

Everyone wordlessly nodded in agreement with Allen, but Dogora alone remained unconvinced. “You? Not strong? Allen, you were practically erasing swathes of monsters.”

“No, Dogora. I really am not strong. It’s true that I can kill a lot of monsters because of how many Summons I have, but each attack from my Summons is a lot weaker than what you and Krena can do.”

The way Allen saw it, his class was best suited playing a supporting role, despite all its flashiness. It was Krena—with Limit Break—who had managed to finish Glaster off, whereas Allen’s Summons had mainly only served as distractions, having failed to deal any significant damage themselves.

Currently, thanks to his weapon and equipment, Dogora’s Attack stat was over 8,000, more than what Dragon B and Beast B had. Even though he was only a one-star class in Normal Mode, after putting in the effort to max his level, gathering a full set of adamantite equipment, and wearing two +1,000 stat rings, he now had stats exceeding those of Rank B Summons that had been both Strengthened and Deputized.

“Also, don’t forget that it’s different from person to person how much time they need to awaken their Extra Skill. We learned at the Academy that it takes some people two, even three years, right? Comparing yourself with other people doesn’t do you any good. All that’s important is believing in yourself and not giving up.”

Dogora and Allen had known each other since they were young. As such, they were close enough to be straight with each other whenever they had anything to say. Allen had his gigantic General Bird B pick him up with its beak and lift him to its back as he finished up with, “And that’s all I have to say before I go. Dogora, I’m counting on you! One hit is all you need! Just keep that in mind!”

Without further ado, Allen flew off to first drop off a few more Summons at Castle Lapolka before heading over to intercept the Demon Lord Army force on the ocean. At the same time, the rest of the No-life Gamers mounted their own Bird Bs and made their way to the fortress while escorting a group of magic ships to begin preparing for the upcoming battle.

* * *

On his way to Castle Lapolka, Allen turned his attention to a Spirit B that was waiting inside a room within a fortress on the Giamutan war front.

Time's running out. I'm gonna have to fight a million monsters by myself soon. Ellie, has he come yet?

"Not yet, Master. I've already sent word, though, so it should not be much longer," the Summon answered.

After the Spirit B who had made it to Fortenia said everything she did to Demonic Deity Rehzal without waiting for Allen's orders, the only action Allen had taken since was to remind his Summons to only act for the sake of the party. Otherwise, he was more than happy to let them all carry on according to their personalities.

That's fine, Allen responded. He then used Ellie's eyes to check out the room she was currently in. It was a space smaller than ten square meters illuminated solely by candles.

"Hey, sorry I ran late." Suddenly, the door to the room opened and a blue-haired young man casually strolled in with a woman in armor following behind.

"Lord Helmios, I believe I asked you to come alone," Ellie said in a reproachful tone.

"Sorry, sorry. I just thought that it'd be faster to have her sit in instead of me going back and forth. Don't worry, she's a member of my party. This is Sylvia."

Allen recognized the woman as the Sword Lord who had visited the Ratashian Academy with Helmios. This was his first time learning that she was in his party, though.

Ellie, there's no helping that she's here. Continue.

“Your will is my command.”

“What was— Ah, Allen’s listening to this conversation?” Helmios quickly caught on to the fact that Ellie had been acting on Allen’s orders when she asked for this meeting and that he was participating in this conversation even now. Allen had been trying to keep things discreet as much as possible by only reaching out to Helmios, but apparently the Hero had other ideas.

Helmios secured the round table and chairs in the room and settled in with Sylvia. After Ellie finished setting out cups of tea, he spoke up. “So, how’re things at Rohzenheim?”

He’s so casual as always. Well, I do prefer this. The elven generals all sound so stiff and formal. Is it because of how long they’ve lived?

“The situation in Rohzenheim...”

Through Ellie, Allen caught Helmios up on what was happening on the elven front: The No-life Gamers had been fighting nonstop since they arrived twenty days ago, cooperating with the elves to kill more than two million monsters so far. They had pushed the front line back to Castle Lapolka and recaptured it, seizing the momentum of the war. And now, a host of five million monsters was approaching, split between marching on land and sailing on the ocean.

“Two million in merely twenty days?” Sylvia was so astonished she was at a loss for words. Even she, a Sword Lord traveling with the Hero, was struggling to wrap her mind around these numbers.

“If you’re capable of killing that many monsters, then it’d make my job so much easier if you’d return to the Central Continent,” Helmios said wryly. After a brief silence, he shrugged. “So, the intel that the Demon Lord Army’s reserves are mobilizing was accurate after all.”

“That’s right. Kill off all the monsters on the Central Continent right now, and you win. They’re not getting any reinforcements.”

That said, I know they’re having a pretty tough time too. The recovery items I sent don’t restore MP, after all.

“I’m glad to hear it, but the Demon Lord Army’s really resilient. The war’s gonna take a while this time. By the way, Allen, our forces are getting healed

out of the blue in the middle of battle. That's your doing, right?"

Allen had sent six hundred thousand Fronds of Life made from Rank E magic stones to the Giamutan front, calling them "elven elixirs." Thanks to those recovery items, the Five Continent Alliance forces had yet to lose a single fortress so far.

A Frond of Life restored 1,000 HP for everyone within a fifty meter radius but did nothing for MP. This was the reason why the fighting was so drawn out on the Central Continent—the soldiers still had to ration their spells and skills. However, Fronds of Life were all Allen had to offer when he was setting off from the Academy.

Besides the Fronds of Life, Allen had also been supporting the fighting on the Central Continent with his Summons. However, of the Summons that he had sent, only four Spirit Bs and one Bird E remained; the rest had already died in battle over the past ten days.

When sending them off, Allen had given each Spirit B a few Blessings of Heaven. They had then consequently hid themselves inside Alliance fortresses and used these Blessings of Heaven whenever they saw fit. This was causing quite a commotion among the Alliance forces, who called these occurrences "miraculous healing." These were what Helmios had been referring to.

"All we've been doing is using elven elixirs just like the ones that Lord Allen sent at the start. But I'm sure no one will believe it, so let's leave them as miracles," Ellie answered glibly. "More importantly, Lord Allen has something to tell you and something he wants to ask."

"What is it?"

"First of all, here are all the recovery items that we Summons still have on hand. Please use these to regain the advantage on the Giamutan front." Ellie produced a bag of fewer than a hundred Blessings of Heaven and passed it to the Hero.

"What's this?"

"The reason behind the miraculous healings. In other words, the elven elixirs that we were using on the Five Continent Alliance soldiers."

Through his fighting on Rohzenheim, Allen was fully aware that Fronds of Life alone were nowhere near enough to support a force fighting the Demon Lord Army. When he gave a simple explanation of the effects of a Blessing of Heaven—through Ellie—Helmios could not hide his shock.

“It restores both HP and MP, and over such a huge area?!”

Hmm, so Giamut doesn't have recovery items with similar efficacy. The gods really were generous with Summoning Lvl. 7. I guess breaking through the limits of Normal Mode really is a big deal.

Sword Lord Sylvia picked up a Blessing of Heaven incredulously and examined it closely.

“I see. So this power is how you managed to bring Rohzenheim back from the brink.” Helmios nodded with understanding.

“No, this is an elven elixir made in Rohzenheim through proprietary means.”

Although Spirit B was sticking with Allen's cover story, Helmios remembered seeing Allen regenerate an arm during their exhibition match at Academy City. He was quite sure that this fascinating fruit was another part of the boy's abilities.

“I don't understand. Why're you lying about this? This is even more incredible than the elves' Healing Magic. If you admit to it, everyone would be extremely thankful. Our emperor would probably even give you a peerage. He made *me* a duke.”

Next to Helmios, Sylvia nodded in agreement.

I wouldn't be surprised. I've heard that your wise emperor is pretty generous with rewarding those who distinguish themselves on the battlefield. He even gave Sword Lord Dverg a personal magic ship, even though he's not a Giamutan citizen.

“This is no lie, though,” Ellie smiled, taking a firm tone. “You can feel free to confirm with Her Majesty the Queen of Rohzenheim.”

“When I last visited Rohzenheim, no one mentioned elixirs like this...but okay. Is this what he wanted to tell me?” Sensing that he would get no further with

the “elven elixir” matter, Helmios decided to move on.

“Half of it,” Ellie replied. “Rohzenheim’s fight with five million monsters will be starting in the next three or four days, with Lord Allen handling one million by himself. As such, he will not be aiding the fight on the Central Continent any further. Those of us still here will be disappearing soon.”

“I see. So he wants us to use these items and handle the rest ourselves?”

“Correction: A thousand more of the same elixir you are holding will be arriving tonight. Please use *those* and handle the rest yourselves.”

“A thousand?!” Sylvia exclaimed. She had only just learned of such effective items and therefore was already overwhelmed with a hundred units. Hearing that an additional thousand would be arriving left her so flabbergasted she could do nothing but laugh. Thoughts of how much this would improve the war situation filled her mind to capacity.

Four days ago, after recapturing Castle Lapolka, Allen had taken stock of how many Blessings of Heaven he had, secured the number that he thought he would need, then entrusted the rest with a Bird B that he sent to the Central Continent. He had even commanded it to maximize its usage of Jet.

“Thanks a lot, Allen. If we use them carefully, these will last us twenty days.”

“Lord Allen says he will send another one thousand in ten days, so you can feel free to use these without holding anything back. Please inform the emperor of Giamut that this is the queen of Rohzenheim’s payment for the supplies he sent.”

Allen was sending these Blessings of Heaven in the name of the queen of Rohzenheim. From Giamut’s point of view, they were now receiving compensation more than tenfold what they had sent.

“Thanks, I’ll pass it on. I’m sure he’ll be plenty troubled receiving such wonderful gifts.” Helmios laughed wryly, understanding that Giamut had sent supplies to Rohzenheim for intentions beyond merely being a good neighbor.

“Lord Allen thanks you and asks whether he can now pose his question.”

“Of course. Ah, hold on, do you mind if I have Sylvia immediately take these

to where they need to go? Our troops need them as soon as possible. Sylvia, I'm sorry, but can you go tell the generals what these do?"

"Sure thing."

The Sword Lord left the room to bring the bag of Blessings of Heaven to the officers still out in the battlefield. Now Helmios and Ellie were alone in the room.

"Lord Allen thanks you for making precious time for him."

"It's all good. So, what does he want to know?"

"The general commanding all five million monsters is a Demonic Deity by the name of Rehzal. Lord Allen wants to ask for advice on dealing with a Demonic Deity."

"Ah, so a Demonic Deity's shown up. Well, it makes sense, especially since they've mobilized their reserves. They *are* aiming to destroy Rohzenheim, after all."

"First of all, do you think this Demonic Deity will fight alongside the five million monsters? Lord Allen says this would greatly affect his strategy."

"Nah, don't worry, he probably wouldn't come out on his own accord. All the Demonic Deities that I fought stayed at the back of the forces they commanded."

Okay, good. It would be a problem if they were to get personally involved like Glaster's group did. I guess I can think of Demonic Deities as final bosses.

"Next, do Demonic Deities have any weaknesses? Are there any tricks to killing them?"

This is what I want to ask most today. I need to gather as much info as I can beforehand and plan out the most effective way of finishing the fight.

"Huh? You plan on fighting the Demonic Deity?"

"Of course."

"You'll very likely lose before this Rehzal gives you the time of the day." Helmios's tone turned serious. "No, let me rephrase that. You *will* lose. You will

die.”

“What do you mean?”

“You just can’t win. As someone who fought you a few months ago, let me say this: you’re nowhere near strong enough right now. After all, Demonic Deities are much stronger than me. Me, the supposed strongest fighter of humanity.”

“Huh? So you’ve never killed any Demonic Deities so far?”

“I got lucky. I’ve killed two.”

“Then—”

“During those fights, I lost companions who had been with me since my Academy days. I really don’t recommend that you fight this Demonic Deity. Not if you don’t want your friends to die, that is.” The pain on Helmios’s face was entirely devoid of his usual flippant attitude.

“How did you kill two of them if they’re so much stronger than you?”

“My Extra Skill, the one that I showed you during our match, is meant to strike down Demonic Deities, not humans. This is the power that Lord Elmea gave me to fight them.”

Ahh, so that’s what the “god” part of the skill name is referring to.

“Understood. Even so, can you tell me what you know about the characteristics and strengths of a Demonic Deity?”

“Of course.”

This conversation between Ellie and Helmios continued up until the start of Allen’s battle above the ocean.

Chapter 13: Battle upon the Ocean

Allen was flying over the ocean, riding on a Griff. Below him, there was water as far as he could see in every direction.

There they are.

The Demon Lord Army slowly began to come into view on the horizon as they headed in Allen's direction. Before long, their numbers completely covered the surface of the water. Thanks to the Bird Es that he had been monitoring the Army with, Allen already knew that they were traveling as groups of a few dozen riding on the backs of large Rank A marine monsters. Furthermore, based on their heading, he also now knew for a fact that the Army was indeed advancing toward Nest.

From what Allen could tell, the monsters on the back of the Rank A ones all looked somewhat haggard and emaciated. In all likelihood, they had been famished for a significant amount of time. By all accounts, the Forgotten Continent to the far north, which served as the Demon Lord's seat of power and the homeland of all these monsters, was a very barren place.

All right, if I'm doing this, I've gotta be thorough. I'm sure those on the Central Continent are doing the same. That's why I sent them Blessings of Heaven, after all.

Allen had once wiped out the goblin and orc populations of the whole realm of Granvelle. Rodin had mentioned that goblins and orcs from neighboring realms had moved in and that their numbers were going up again, albeit slowly. Based on this, Allen understood that monsters did not simply respawn in this world, which meant the more he killed in this war, the longer it would take the Demon Lord Army to rebuild itself. There was no way to tell what percentage four million made up of the entire force under the Demon Lord's command, but a loss of such numbers was surely going to set them back by at least a few years. This was why Allen was not satisfied with merely repelling the Demon Lord Army and insisted so much on annihilating it.

“You’ve all signed your death warrants.” Allen opened his grimoire to check the cards in the holders. *General Antsy, General Dora, and General Mirror are all at Lapolka, and I have twenty-two slots left available.*

The Deputize skill could only be used on Rank B Summons—and only one of each type, at that. And this time, Allen had left the Deputized Insect, Dragon, and Stone at Castle Lapolka.

“Come out, Ellie. It’s show time.”

“Your will is my command.”

General Ellie appeared. Unlike other Summons that grew larger in size after being Deputized, Ellie grew in age. The Ellie with the General position looked like a version of herself in her midtwenties, whereas the Soldier ones appeared slightly younger than twenty.

Additionally, Allen called out Dragon Bs, pairing them with Spirit Bs and buffing them all with the Fish D, Fish C, and Fish B swimming in the water below.

Come to think of it, this is my first time seeing my Fish-type Summons swimming in actual water.

With his preparations in order, Allen and his Summons approached the Demon Lord Army. The monsters noticed them about the same time they came within attacking range.

“All right, let’s do this! We’re starting off with stopping their advance. Aim for the one at the front!”

“Yes, Master.” General Ellie obediently thrust her palms forward and shouted, “Gravity!”

A jet-black sphere appeared right before the face of the sea serpent-like Rank A monster she was targeting. The sphere began to rapidly expand until it swallowed the beast’s entire head. This left the other monsters on its back stranded on a headless corpse as it bled profusely into the ocean.

Whoa, General Ellie’s normal Ability is powerful enough to kill a Rank A monster in a single attack. I guess it does make sense for Gravity to deal so

much more damage than Dora's Fire Breath, since its area of effect is so much smaller.

Gravity created a jet-black sphere with a ten-meter radius that dealt massive gravitational damage to the first target it came into contact with. The only limitation was that said target had to be within the casting Spirit B's view.

"Good job," Allen told General Ellie before turning to the other Spirit Bs, all of whom had been made Soldiers. "Everyone else, do what she did. Focus on crushing the heads of the 'ships.'"

Nineteen voices replied in unison, "Your will is our command."

"I also want a place to stand. Dora, clear the back of that first monster for me."

"You got it, Master!" The Dragon Bs Allen had Summoned with his remaining two slots bathed the passenger monsters with blasts of Fire Breath.

When was the last time I went hunting by myself? Oh right, when I was preparing for the fight with Helmios. But my goal at the time was mainly gathering magic stones, so it doesn't really count. So the last time I went fighting for real would be...oh wow, all the way back when I killed those armored ants in Granvelle.

At the time, Allen had ended up having trouble making his Beast D Summons cooperate with each other. In contrast, his Spirit Bs now naturally formed pairs and were making their way through the enemy ranks efficiently. There was even a clear chain of command between the General and Soldiers—Allen had never seen Summons give each other orders before, but that was precisely what General Ellie was now doing with the Soldier Ellies. In other words, they were now capable of fighting without him having to get involved. This was likely one of the intended benefits of Deputize.

"Master, please look out! Enemy flyers incoming!"

As it turned out, many of the passenger monsters were capable of flight. They had now spread their wings and were making a beeline for Allen as a huge flock.

Oh? So they're actually attacking me this time?

When the force of one million monsters marched on Tiamo, the No-life Gamers had doggedly attacked it but were stubbornly shrugged off. This time, though, the monsters had apparently determined that Allen's strategy of singling out the seabound monsters was impossible to ignore.

Did they include the flyers as a way to deal with me? Heh, fools.

"Ellie, use Black Hole."

"Your will is my command."

When Allen ordered General Ellie to use her Awakened Ability, a gigantic jet-black sphere appeared above the ocean's surface. It then sucked up all the enemies within a radius of dozens of meters and crushed them to death. The attack, which was based on Intelligence, dealt destruction several times that of Gravity. In addition, it also had the effect of disrupting the flight of the monsters in the sky. As with most other Awakened Abilities, this one had a cooldown time of a full day.

Multiple large seabound monsters along with their passengers were crumpled into a single mass and crushed to death. Naturally, those in the sky also got sucked up, adding to the clump of death.

Of course, the effectiveness of each Summons' Abilities and Awakened Abilities differed depending on the target. In this case, it was clear to see that Spirit B's Gravity and Black Hole were both extremely effective against flying monsters, but they did almost nothing to amorphous monsters such as slimes.

"Okay, time to change Generals." Allen dispelled Deputize once and then recast it on another Spirit B. When Summons were made Generals, their stats would double, which was reflected in the power of their Awakened Abilities. Allen figured that if he was going to make a Summon use its Awakened Ability, he might as well make it a General beforehand.

Hmm? What's going on?

The Demon Lord Army now had Allen completely surrounded, and he was using his Summons to clear swathes of them. While being so completely outnumbered was business as usual for Allen, something still seemed off to him. There was a constant nagging feeling in his mind as he continued to fight.

When the sun had set after half a day of fighting, Allen figured out what was bothering him: the Demon Lord Army was not letting up its attack. To the best of Allen's knowledge, monsters in this world needed to rest when exhausted, with his Summons being the only exception. Having fought for a whole month without any supply lines should have taken its toll on these members of the Army, yet they were showing no signs of backing off even though it was now dark out.

Ah, I get it. This was a trap for me.

Now that Allen thought about it, if the Demon Lord Army truly were focused solely on attacking Nest, then it would be ignoring him right now. This would be all the more true if Nest was meant to satiate the monsters that had been starving all this time. What had happened, however, was that the monsters had started charging toward and firing spells at Allen the moment they laid eyes on him. Even more, the large number of flyers in this force seemed like a conscious decision made with the knowledge that Allen used Dragon-type Summons to fight.

The clincher was that the monsters were using a new strategy they had never utilized in the war with Rohzenheim so far: fighting in turns. Many monsters not currently engaged in battle with Allen were resting far off in the back, as if to catch their breath so they could continue throughout the night. The Demon Lord Army had wisened up and was no longer mindlessly throwing bodies at their target.

"Looks like Demonic Deity Rehzal changed up his tactics after you got done in," Allen commented. "He never mentioned doing this while you were still there."

"What do you wish to do, Master?" General Ellie asked. "Would you like to get some distance and rest? We can buy you time."

"Nah, I can keep going. They're being nice enough to come to me, so I've gotta take advantage of it. Grinding through the night isn't so bad every once in a while."

If Allen was to be honest, the Demon Lord Army's tactic of fighting through the night had taken him completely by surprise. However, his original intention

of wiping out this force remained unchanged, and equally unchanged was the fact that Nest would be eradicated if he were to retreat here.

A grin came over Allen's face as he savored the rare promise of being able to completely throw himself into a fight and forget everything else. His fight in this pitch-black world lit solely by magic and torches had only just begun.

* * *

"I-Is that true?" Field Marshall Lukdraal asked, his voice wavering with concern.

"Yes. That is indeed what Master said," Ellie replied.

The Spirit B who had been assigned to Castle Lapolka was now in the room located deep within the fortress that had been occupied by Glaster mere days ago, briefing the elven generals on Allen's situation. Although Allen had begun fighting yesterday, the Demon Lord Army host heading for Lapolka would be arriving tomorrow, so the elves still had a bit more time to prepare.

Cecil mumbled, "But that means Allen..."

"Can't rest," Krena finished.

Worry weighed heavily on both girls' faces upon hearing that Allen was still fighting against an enemy that was not allowing him to rest or sleep. Intel about Bird B seemed to have leaked, as many of the monsters sent his way could either fly or use magic or archery. Allen's circumstances were demanding, to put it mildly.

"Master says there's no need to worry," Ellie said reassuringly. "At least, the fighting itself isn't giving him too much grief. However..."

The Spirit B continued to describe how the battle at sea was going. Allen had no issues fighting around the clock, but even he needed to take breaks every once in a while. Whenever he tried withdrawing, however, the Demon Lord Army resumed making its way south—in other words, they must have been ordered to attack Nest if Allen was not present. He still had every intention of killing all one million monsters, but he had sent word to Nest just in case.

"Sounds like he's having a pretty rough time of it," Dogora noted. "Shouldn't

he recall some of the Summons he left here in Lapolka to use those slots for himself?”

The rest of the No-life Gamers nodded in agreement. At the moment, thirty of Allen’s seventy holder slots were taken up by Summons stationed at Castle Lapolka.

“Master says your situation is more grave. In all likelihood, the Demon Lord Army will be attacking Castle Lapolka from all four sides.”

Allen conveyed through Spirit B how the host of four million had split into three forces of one million, one million, and two million this morning. The two million group was still marching straight ahead, but the other groups of one million had begun scaling the mountains to the east and west of Castle Lapolka.

“Wh— That’s impossible!” Lukdraal cried in disbelief. “Those mountains are far too steep to climb! They’ve protected us from monsters for centuries now.”

Castle Lapolka was situated in a highly defensible position sandwiched between extremely precipitous cliffs. The summits towered higher than anything Allen had seen even in his previous life. The only reason the elves had a fortress in this place was because a Grand Spirit User had erected it using the power of a grand earthen spirit in the past.

Of course, without the help of a spirit, this was a massive range of jagged peaks that were extremely difficult to circle around. The elves had purposely chosen to take back this fortress precisely because they thought that even the monsters would not be able to attack it so easily.

“Normally that would be true,” Ellie said on Allen’s behalf, “but a large percentage of the monsters in the force heading your way are insect-types.”

The composition of the reserves was significantly different from that of the original three million sent to attack Rohzenheim. This time, there were large numbers of creatures with many legs, such as centipedes and spiders, that enabled them to scale mountains with ease. In fact, the mountains to the left and right of Lapolka were swarming with their wriggling and crawling forms at the moment.

“Does that mean we’ll be fighting on three sides?” Lukdraal asked.

Castle Lapolka had been designed to see fighting only to the north and south. There were very few protections in place at the eastern and western walls, making them difficult to hold.

“In all likelihood, there won’t be enough space on the east and west side for all one million to attack at the same time,” Ellie continued. “That means portions of both forces will be circling all the way around to attack from the south.”

So much for those three days we spent wiping out all the monsters south of Lapolka. The Demon Lord Army is definitely learning from its past mistakes and adapting.

The Demon Lord Army had first tried to attack several cities simultaneously and had been foiled. It then brought all its forces together into a host of one million to strike a single city, only to be foiled again. Its tactic now seemed to have been developed based on the lessons learned from both those experiences.

“The battle is *tomorrow!*” one of the generals wailed. “We’ll have to reform all our formations *again!*”

The Demon Lord Army had changed its tactics so suddenly that the elves had been completely taken by surprise. Now, they needed to split their total force of 300,000 soldiers into four groups. Lukdraal was about to call for all the commanders, but Spirit B stopped him.

“Master has more to say, Field Marshal. He says he has an idea.”

* * *

Put simply, Allen’s “idea” was for those at Castle Lapolka to hold out for five days. It was so simple that it could hardly be called an idea—it was practically a command.

“But that... Is it even possible?” Lukdraal sounded doubtful.

“It should be possible so long as you focus only on holding the walls. Master says he needs five days to reach Castle Lapolka, so please do whatever you can to survive until then.”

“Five whole days...”

At least five days, Allen added silently. Though I'll do my best to be quick.

At the rate things were going, he needed four more days to annihilate the seabound force, plus one day for travel. He then proceeded to tell the elven generals how he expected the Demon Lord Army to distribute its numbers for each wall and what he thought was the best composition for the elves to deploy their troops in response.

Numbers of Monsters on Each Side

- North: 2,000,000
- East: 500,000
- West: 500,000
- South: 1,000,000

Ideal Deployment

- North: All of the No-life Gamers + Spirit User Gatoluuga + 90,000 elves
- East: Dragon Bs (General + Soldiers) + 60,000 elves
- West: Insect Bs (General + Soldiers) + 60,000 elves
- South: Stone Bs (General + Soldiers) + 90,000 elves

Cecil nodded with understanding. “I see, so you’re maximizing the effects of Deputize. Soldiers have to stay within a hundred meters from their Generals, right?”

“Dead right,” Ellie replied, sounding satisfied.

“Where should we send those with two-star Talents like the Spirit Wizards and Bow Lords, then?” Lukdraal asked. “We have more than 7,000 here in the fortress at the moment.”

“Stone Bs are not very good at dealing damage, so you should leave more in the south, then distribute the remaining between the three other sides

equally.”

“Very well, we’ll do that. Anything else that Allen wants to say?”

“Master says that tomorrow, a griffin will arrive, bringing two thousand elven elixirs along with something else.”

“Something else?”

“It’s crucial to the strategy, so please listen carefully. I will now go into details.”

When the generals heard what Ellie said next, they all exchanged doubtful looks. However, upon recalling all the times Allen’s unconventional strategies had worked thus far, they decided to put their trust in him once again.

Chapter 14: Defense of Castle Lapolka

The next day, the Demon Lord Army finally reached Castle Lapolka. As expected, the monsters opted to surround the fortress from all four sides. The No-life Gamers had spent three whole days wiping out the monsters to the south of the fortress, but all that effort had counted for nothing thanks to the monsters seizing the advantage of the terrain through brute force.

When the sun rose, the Demon Lord Army launched its attack. The elves awaited their orders as they looked out over all four walls at the approaching tide. The eastern and western walls were not as thick as the northern and southern ones as they had not been designed to be manned; however, there was still some space along the top. Soldiers now filled that space in neat, orderly lines.

Insect monsters with grotesque appearances gradually drew closer. One younger elven soldier could not help but to turn anxiously away from the sight of them. Just as he did, however, a sonorous voice rang out from a point high above the tallest building in the fortress.

“Focus on the fight. This is your country and your fight, is it not?”

“Y-Yes, sir!”

The young soldier looked up at the voice and found hovering in the sky a dragon so massive that its head alone measured several meters long. This was, of course, General Dora. The sight of the Soldier Doras under his command, all of them as tall as the wall that protected the fortress, bracing themselves for battle seemed almost funny. Their bodies were so gigantic that, compared to them, the insect monsters were like normal ants to the elves.

Right before the monsters reached the walls, Allen gave out a command remotely from his location over the ocean. *General Dora, these monsters are the type to climb up the walls to directly attack the elves. Be thorough in incinerating them to death.*

“Yes, Master!” General Dora replied before addressing his subordinates. “You lot! Make sure to burn them all!”

“ROOOOAAARR!”

The Dragon B Soldiers began spamming their Ability, covering the entire length of the wall in flames. Billows of smoke carrying the pungent stench of burning chitin and acid rose into the sky as the elven soldiers joined in and began firing their bows.

“Use your skills! Use them nonstop!” General Dora shouted. Even though the elven generals and officers were present, he was proactively giving out orders to the troops.

Interesting. Looks like the Summons given General and Soldier positions just naturally assume their respective roles.

As Allen continued analyzing the feed from the Summons he was Sharing with, thousands of monsters that looked like scorpions spread the wings they kept hidden under the exoskeleton on their backs then took to the sky all at once.

“Shoot them down! Don’t let a single one inside!” an elven general howled, alarm thick in his voice.

Every time a fortress had fallen in the past, it had been due to a single point of failure, one lone wall that first got breached before turning into a funnel which the monsters then poured through en masse. The officers knew that the moment they allowed the monsters through, their loss was guaranteed; even the northernmost fortress, with its impressive walls double the height of Lapolka’s, had fallen the same way. To make matters worse, they were currently facing flying monsters, against which the elves no longer had aerial superiority. The decision to prioritize killing these flying scorpions was therefore based on past experiences steeped in fear and hindsight.

General Dora, use Hellfire of Fury.

“Puny insects that dare to rise to our height ought to know their place!”

Light flashed with such intensity it almost seemed like a physical blow, after which a stream—or rather, a beam of flames burst from General Dora’s mouth.

The thousands of airborne monsters were all caught up in the incandescent fire and erased without a trace. Other monsters wriggling and crawling their way down the mountain surface got caught up as well and were summarily reduced to dust, dashed against the rocks that immediately began melting like lava.

One of the elven soldiers was left breathless by the sight. “Th-This is crazy. I’m not dreaming, am I?”

“What’re you doing?! Protect this wall with your life!” General Dora roared.

“S-S-Sir, yes, sir!”

Okay, things are going well. Looks like the east side can handle itself just fine. I had to have General Dora use his Awakened Ability pretty much right off the bat, but I can still Deputize the other Doras and have them do the same when needed.

The cooldown time for the Summons’ Awakened Abilities was a full day. As such, managing when to use them was extremely crucial.

Next, Allen turned his attention to the western wall. There, he found a truly bizarre battle going on.

“Clack clack clack!”

“CLACK CLACK CLACK!”

The ten-meter tall General Antsy was giving commands to its Soldier Antsys that were in turn making an army of Lil Antsys fight at the front in an elliptical formation.

“Keep up the Healing Magic! Give it all you got!”

“Sir, yes, sir!”

The wall on this side was manned by as many archers as healing mages. The latter were desperately backing up the ten Insect Bs fighting on the ground level.

Good, good. The monsters are targeting the Insect Bs for being outside of the walls, whereas the elven healers are positioned behind them and keeping their HP topped up. Looks like this side will be able to go on for a long time.

In contrast with the east side, where Dragon Bs were breathing fire and tearing through the ranks of attacking monsters, the west side was seeing Insect Bs shoulder the bulk of the fighting as elven healers in the rear spammed AoE healing spells. Of course, when many of the healers got low on MP, a Blessing of Heaven would be used to top them back up. By carefully timing the use of those items, these healers would be able to continue to provide support to the Insect Bs for an extended period of time.

The Insect Bs had each had the opportunity to use their Awakened Ability, Spawn, twice. This meant there were 2,000 Lil Antsys currently fighting on the elves' behalf. All of them had inherited stats from their parents in the General or Soldier positions, which gave them a minimum Defense of 2,750. They had also been buffed by both Fish-type Summons and the elves, all of which stacked together to make them impervious to most attacks from the monsters. Those that did take damage were then promptly healed back up by elven healers. It was only very rarely that one of them ever died.

A certain number of Lil Antsys and Antsys were standing some distance back to focus on showering the enemy forces with their Ability, Formic Acid. The acid they generated was so caustic that it melted the exoskeletons of the insect-type monsters, leaving them so vulnerable they could be easily finished off even by Lil Antsys, who had nowhere near the Attack that Beast Bs and Dragon Bs had. Again and again, the giant ants' mandibles clamped down on their enemies' exposed weak points, snuffing out their lives.

The elven archers prioritized killing the monsters crowding around the Insect Bs. Their arrows fell like rain on the vermin, reducing entire swathes to mere corpses with each volley.

Looks like it'll be easy harvesting magic stones from this side when the fighting's over. All right, let's have them slowly move along the wall.

Although a slight tweak was called for, the western front also seemed to be holding up well. Each Insect B could create a hundred more Lil Antsys each day, which meant that so long as fewer than a thousand died twenty-four hours in, their numbers would actually be going up. And at the rate things were going, this seemed like the guaranteed outcome.

All right, so the eastern and western walls are set.

Satisfied with how things were going, Allen checked the position of the sun through his Summons' eyes. The battle had begun with the sunrise, and it was now around noon. Both sides had been fighting for eight hours straight.

"It's about time. Get moving, but keep up the cover fire!"

"SIR, YES, SIR!" The elven troops headed for the stairs and started descending the walls, continuing to unleash their attacks the whole time.

A different group then promptly climbed the stairs and assumed the previous troops' positions, taking over the fighting. At the same time, a third group gathered at the foot of the stairs, on standby. Those who were exhausted from eight straight hours of fighting now made a beeline for the various resting areas set up near the center of the fortress grounds.

I'm glad this is working out. The Demon Lord Army thought it was being smart with their strategy of not giving the elves a break, but we've taken countermeasures!

This time, the Demon Lord Army was clearly taking a new approach. No longer was it just charging en masse in one big force like it had done at Tiamo. The force heading south over the sea was assaulting Allen with a constant barrage, preventing him from getting any rest. This was, in theory, a good strategy to use against both humans and elves, as they generally had much lower stamina than monsters. And so the demons were doing the same in their fight against Lapolka. They had more than enough numbers to attack in turn and keep the elves fighting the whole day long. The Demon Lord Army was very quick to adopt new strategies, indicating that it had a very effective command structure.

Unfortunately for the Demon Lord Army, Allen had sort of gotten advance notice of this new strategy due to having engaged them in battle two days earlier. He had then quickly drawn the conclusion that the Army might use the same trick when attacking Castle Lapolka, and therefore advised the elven generals to split up their 300,000 troops into three groups of 100,000 each and have them fight, stand by, and rest for eight hours in turn. In short, he had brought over the concept of the three-shift system from his own world to this

one and applied it to war.

There were those among the soldiers who were worried about only having 100,000 fighting at any given time. To assuage those worries, Allen supplemented his strategy by bolstering their forces with Deputized Summons and doling out so many Blessings of Heaven that the soldiers could fight and use their skills with no restrictions whatsoever.

Within the framework of this strategy, sleep was considered as crucial as the actual fighting. To help the soldiers get the rest they needed, Allen had used Grass F's Awakened Ability, Herb, to create two-meter-tall potted trees and placed them in the center of each of the resting areas. Earlier, when Allen dispatched General Griff to Lapolka, he had loaded it with not only Blessings of Heaven but also these potted trees that gave off a fragrance that lowered the natural MP recovery time from six hours to three for anyone who smelled it within a hundred meters. Additionally, the fragrance also possessed the same calming effect emanated by Grass F's normal Ability, Aroma, the efficacy of which had already been proven when it helped Rodin, Allen's father, sleep through the agony of his major abdominal injury.

Allen now asked the Spirit B stationed as his proxy in Castle Lapolka to walk into one of the resting areas so he could check it out. Sure enough, he found all the soldiers inside already fast asleep despite all the adrenaline that should have been coursing through their veins from fighting for their lives mere minutes ago.

"This is just killer, Master. I never cease to be amazed," Ellie sighed.

All four sides are holding up pretty well so far, but the southern side is lagging behind quite a bit in dispatching the monsters. Hardly surprising, since I posted the least number of Summons there and they don't have long-distance attacks.

Satisfied with what he saw through Ellie's eyes, Allen then turned his direction to the south wall, where he found the attacking insect-type monsters crawling all over his four Stone Bs. The one general and three soldiers respectively possessed 7,000 and 5,000 Endurance. Similar to the Insect Bs to the west, these Stone Bs were also fully buffed with higher Evasion and lower damage taken, among other effects. This made them nigh invincible against the Rank B

monsters, which only had around 1,000 Attack.

That said, there are monsters that can use skills too—for all I know, some of those skills may ignore Endurance or reduce Defense. And there's bound to be the eventual Rank A monster.

The Stone Bs were twenty and fifteen meters tall, even taller than the fortress's walls. This height allowed them to use their round shields to scrape off the monsters climbing on any parts of the walls. When they turned around to do so, however, a robed skeleton raised its staff tipped with a red jewel and pointed it at one of their exposed backs.

Oh? That's a Rank A monster, right? Lucky us. Mirror, get ready to use Total Reflect.

A massive ball of fire appeared at the end of the skeleton's staff and shot forward as if to burn both the Stone B and the elves on top of the wall. However, the Stone B turned around with perfect timing and used the shield that it had been scraping with to block the attack. The flames promptly reversed direction and blasted the entire area in front of the Stone B with even greater force than before, reducing the skeleton and all the monsters in the area to cinders.

* * *

Even when the sun had set, the monsters continued attacking by the light of their magic and torches. Just as Allen had expected, they intended on fighting through the night. By now, sixteen hours had passed, so the next group of elven soldiers that had been on standby quickly took over for the third shift. The same was happening on Allen's side too, and he was starting to feel it around the wee hours.

"Guess it's about time I took a nap," Allen murmured.

"Your will is our command, Master. We won't let you down," Ellie replied.

We still have 850,000 left to go. I went and promised to be back in five days, so I gotta pick up the pace. The monsters are doing all the work in coming to me, so let's set tomorrow's quota at 200,000. Would I be able to attack more of them at the same time if I went deeper into their ranks?

After taking a shower, Allen munched on a molmo as he reflected over how things had gone that day and brainstormed ways to raise his efficiency—this moment where he took the time to contemplate and theorize was his favorite part. Before long, he settled in for a nap on the back of his griffin.

* * *

Five days had passed since the Demon Lord Army first began its assault on Castle Lapolka. The elves had desperately held the monsters at bay this whole time, firmly believing in their eventual victory. Still, although Allen had regularly dispatched Bird Bs to bring them more Blessings of Heaven to ensure that they never ran out, the elves' battle strength was being slowly whittled down, with about ten percent of the 300,000 soldiers having lost their lives in the fighting so far. Of course, this sacrifice had brought about commensurate results.

On the eastern and western sides where the Dragon Bs and Insect Bs fought, half of the original 500,000 attacking monsters were now dead. Many different factors had contributed to this unprecedented feat, including having fought five whole days nonstop, the elves having had the ability to heal as much as needed, the introduction of the three-shift system, and the help of the inexhaustible Summons.

Over these five days, the number of Lil Antsys had continued growing steadily, such that there were now 3,000 more of them than at the start of the battle. And the more numerous they were, the more efficient they were at killing the monsters.

Currently, there was still no observable change in the Demon Lord Army's policy of applying pressure on Castle Lapolka from all four sides. They did, however, redirect 200,000 from the north and south each to bolster the thinning numbers in the east and west.

Throughout all this, the No-life Gamers had contributed to the war effort as best they could from atop their Bird Bs. Krena and Dogora rode solo as Volmaar flew with Sophie and Keel with Cecil. All this time, they had been following Allen's instructions to fight in a way that focused on helping the elves endure the onslaught.

"Allen's late," Keel grumbled. "Isn't it about time he'd be back?"

“I’m sure he’ll be appearing any moment now,” Cecil replied. “He confirmed last night that he’ll make it back today.”

“What’s taking him so long, then?” Keel spotted a wounded elf and promptly cast Healing Magic on him.

Dogora and Krena, who specialized in close quarters combat, were fighting defensively by riding their griffins up and down the length of the fortress wall and attacking the backs of the climbing monsters, prioritizing the Rank A ones that were too much for the elves to handle.

Suddenly, Krena noticed three Rank A dragons come charging in. “Three dragons incoming! Dogora, help please!”

“You got it!”

Krena managed to stop one while Dogora worked with Volmaar to suppress another. That left the last dragon a clear path straight to the wall, however. The elves on the wall immediately began shooting at it, but they did not have nearly enough firepower to bring it down before it got close enough to attack.

Seeing this, Sophie poked her head out from behind Volmaar and cried out in a voice loud enough to reach everyone, “I’ll handle this! Krena and Dogora, please fall back!”

Sophie quickly swapped out the Endurance-boosting ring she was wearing with a +1,000 MP boosting one to match the ring already on her other hand, used a Blessing of Heaven to refill her MP, then lifted her staff with both hands. Upon seeing the heat haze springing up around Sophie’s figure from a distance, Krena and Dogora quickly broke up their fight and put some distance between themselves and the dragons.

“O grand spirit, please heed my call.”

A mass of flame appeared before the Bird B that Sophie was riding. It rapidly grew in size, eventually taking on a large humanoid form.

“I am the grand fire spirit, Ifrit. Daughter of the elves, your race’s contract with the Sovereign of Spirits binds me to lend you my aid.”

Sophie had used her Extra Skill, Great Spirit Manifestation, to call the grand

fire spirit, Ifrit, to this world. His face did not seem to have a mouth, but his voice could be heard loud and clear.

Sophie said respectfully, “My heartfelt thanks, Lord Ifrit.”

In response to Sophie’s instructions, Ifrit quickly shot toward the dragon that was closing in on the fortress, his form covered in flames that roared with increasing intensity. When he caught up, he charged straight into the monster’s abdomen. The next moment, the dragon blew apart.

“What power...” Cecil, the only other Gamer capable of using Fire Magic, was the one most astonished by what just happened. Making a dragon that surely had fire elemental resistance explode was far beyond her abilities.

After that, Ifrit handily finished off the remaining two dragons and wiped out all the monsters in the area.

Through Grand Spirit Materialization, Sophie had the ability to call upon grand spirits of fire, earth, wind, and water and ask them to attack her enemy, heal her up, or assist her in battle in any other way. This Extra Skill’s cooldown time was a full day. Its duration was based on Sophie’s max MP value—activating the Extra Skill required using up her entire MP gauge—which was why she had changed out the ring she was wearing.

“Oh, I see you went with Ifrit this time,” a voice said from behind Sophie.

She whirled around in elation. “Lord Allen!”

Before Sophie’s eyes was Allen, perched on General Griff. Even though he had only been away for a few days, she felt as though it had been much longer.

“Ah, there you are.” Cecil had Keel bring their griffin close and clambered over to the back of Allen’s Bird B. Apparently she felt most comfortable in the seat behind Allen’s solely because of how often she had sat there in the past. “Did you have some trouble?”

“Sorta,” Allen replied. “I haven’t fully finished off all one million yet, but I’ve got things handled.”

As promised, Allen had returned to Lapolka. There were still about 100,000 monsters traveling across the ocean, but he knew his Summons were capable of

handling that number by themselves and had thus hurried back on Griff.

Now...it looks like there are still about three million left in all. As expected, the north side has the most. Killing all of them is gonna take time.

Thanks to his Summons, Allen fully grasped the war situation. The south side was standing firm thanks to his four Stone Bs, so he added five Dragon Bs to support them.

“Doras, back them up.”

“You got it, Master!”

As for the north side, which was facing the largest number of monsters, Allen sent them seven Dragon Bs. The Summons promptly got to work roasting the monsters that were clinging to the walls while taking care not to harm the elven soldiers.

Yeah, Dragon B really is best for clearing away trash mobs, thanks to its AoE attack.

“So...the Demon Lord Army’s already finished changing shifts, right?” Allen asked.

“Huh? Oh, right, about two hours ago,” Cecil replied.

Okay, good.

In order to tired the elves out, the Demon Lord Army had been fighting in twelve-hour shifts. In other words, they were using a two-shift system. Although they had more stamina than the elves, the fact still remained that the monsters were fighting for twelve hours straight. And that was something that Allen intended on taking advantage of.

“Everyone, let’s go wipe out the exhausted monsters. You all still good to continue?”

“Wow, that sounds like such an Allen idea!” Krena replied, laughing.

I mean, I am Allen after all, Allen thought wryly before saying out loud, “All right, let’s go!”

“Let’s go!” Krena echoed.

The No-life Gamers dived back into the fight with the new burst of energy they had received from Allen's return.

Chapter 15: In Exchange for Payment

The battle at Castle Lapolka went much faster once Allen joined the fight. Having left the battle above the sea and come to Lapolka in person, he could now adjust the number of Summons as needed and give them detailed instructions. Thanks to this, the number of elves getting killed went down considerably.

Allen and his companions had spent the subsequent few days doubling down on wiping out the monsters that were exhausted after consecutive days of fighting. Now, thirteen days after the Demon Lord Army first launched its assault on Castle Lapolka—or eight days after Allen entered the fray—the four million monsters assaulting the fortress were entirely gone.

The elves cheered like never before at their victory over a force with over ten times their own numbers. At the same time, many elves gathered in the center of the fortress where their fallen comrades, reverently wrapped in cloth, were being buried. There, they shared news of their victory with hot tears streaming down their faces.

The attacking force had included all those the Demon Lord Army had stationed north of Castle Lapolka. The fact that those had been annihilated meant the threat looming over Rohzenheim was now almost completely eliminated.

“All right... Let’s go.”

After the burial was over, the elves raised their heads and set their jaws. Their work was not yet over; they still had to take care of the monster corpses strewn around the fortress. Aside from harvesting the magic stones and other usable parts, they still had to burn away what was left before it began to rot. And so the elves applied themselves assiduously, carrying the pain of their grief in their hearts.

Unlike Allen’s battle against the monsters that never made it on land, there had been very real and deeply felt losses here. Now he helped out where he

could with his Summons, with the Antsys and Lil Antsys proving their usefulness by harvesting and transporting while Doras readily incinerated whatever they were asked to. Allen kept quiet and simply threw himself into his tasks.

* * *

Two days later, when most of the work that needed doing at Lapolka was completed, the No-life Gamers returned to Tiamo to inform the queen and generals how the battle had gone.

“—And that is the end of my report.”

“I see. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Lord Allen. We will definitely repay this debt.” The queen bowed deeply as her dumbstruck generals watched on, still trying to process the report of what was nothing short of a miraculous victory.

“It only worked out because your men fought hard and put their lives on the line for their queen and country.” Despite his own overwhelming contributions in this war, these words came unaffectedly from Allen’s mouth.

“I...see.” Field Marshal Lukdraal, the first to recover, spoke on behalf of his fellow generals. “Even so, we are grateful to you. Truly.”

During the single month since Allen’s arrival, the Demon Lord Army had been completely obliterated, reserves and all. In the past it had usually attacked with only around 500,000 each year; however, the elves had managed to defeat *fourteen* times that number in an incredibly short amount of time. Those present no longer harbored any lingering doubts about the Sovereign of Spirits’ prior prophecy.

As for the Sovereign himself, he was still shining away on the queen’s lap, fast asleep on his back.

It’s been over half a month now. Does it take that long for him to evolve? Wait, do gods “evolve”? Since he’s becoming a deity, does that mean he’ll “de-evolve”? Heh heh, okay, that was bad, even for me.

Allen recalled a series of games he played in his previous life that involved gathering a bunch of monsters. A giggle bubbled up when he imagined how Rohzen would look after evolving. The queen gave him a puzzled look, so he

quickly straightened his expression and continued from earlier.

“Your Majesty, my lords—this brings me no joy, but I remind you that this war is not entirely over just yet.”

“Our capital is indeed still under the demons’ control.”

“That is so, Your Majesty. Only after we defeat Demonic Deity Rehzal and recapture Fortenia can this war be truly declared over.”

The queen nodded, then suddenly recalled something and anxiously asked, “By the way, Lord Allen, in regard to *that* matter...did you do something untoward to the emperor of Giamut?”

“Huh? What’s she talking about?” Dogora asked, exchanging puzzled looks with the rest of the No-life Gamers.

Allen answered glibly. “‘Untoward’? Perish the thought, Your Majesty. Members of the Five Continent Alliance are in a give-and-take relationship with each other, are they not? I take it that negotiations went smoothly thanks to the prior investment I made?”

His companions immediately caught on to the fact that he was up to his usual scheming again. Cecil lightly prodded him. “What is this ‘matter’ that the queen is talking about? What ‘prior investment’ did you make? Explain.”

Oh right, I haven’t told everyone yet.

By “prior investment,” Allen was referring to all the Blessings of Heaven that he had sent to the Central Continent. It was not his intention to keep this secret, but this was something he had done after he had left his companions at Castle Lapolka, and it had slipped his mind after he rejoined them.

“I sent the Central Continent a few presents ahead of time in preparation for our fight with Demonic Deity Rehzal. I just needed Her Majesty’s help with what followed,” Allen explained.

“Allen, what did you make Her Majesty do?”

“I thought we’d need a helper, so I asked Her Majesty to make a request of the emperor of Giamut.”

“A helper? From the Central Continent?” Dogora still looked confused.

Allen turned to the queen. “Does the fact that you’re bringing this up mean he’s already arrived?” He asked expectantly. “If so, why isn’t he here?”

“He’s already h—” Dogora cut himself off and turned to the room’s large double doors with the rest of the Gamers.

A young man with hair the color of water walked in, following the Spirit B serving as his guide. Naturally, Allen’s companions immediately recognized this young man.

“You sure run your superiors ragged, Allen. It wouldn’t hurt you to show those above you a bit more respect, you know?”



“What’re you saying? Oh. My. God. Did you make the trip *al///* the way from the Central Continent?! Just for our sake?! You’re so *kind*, oh esteemed Hero!”

The sight of Allen casually exchanging banter with the young man shocked Cecil so much that she completely forgot she was in the presence of royalty. “Wha— Why is Helmios— I mean, the Lord Hero?!” she shouted, then grabbed Allen and began shaking him violently. “Why. Is. He. Here?!”

“Okay, okay, let me explain!”

Allen did his best to calm Cecil down, then began describing how he had reached out to the Hero who was still on the Giamutan border to ask for advice on defeating Demonic Deity Rehzal. Through listening to Helmios’s account of his fight against other Demonic Deities in the past, however, Allen realized that they were significantly stronger than he had expected. His new skill, Deputize, was nowhere near enough to make up the difference, and even on the off chance that the No-life Gamers beat Rehzal, it would be at enormous sacrifice.

In light of all this, Allen had decided to take the strategy of “summoning” Helmios—who had two Demonic Deity kills under his belt and the Extra Skill that made them possible—to Rohzenheim. And so he swiftly made his move, first delivering a considerable number of Blessings of Heaven to Giamut before having the queen contact the Giamutan emperor with her “conditions.”

“Conditions?” Cecil asked apprehensively. “What conditions?”

Helmios answered on Allen’s behalf. “I’m on loan for ten days. Apparently I’m worth as much as a thousand elven elixirs. Good thing that’s now cleared up, right?”

“Bartering using the Hero...” Cecil was left at a loss for any further words.

The world’s one and only Hero, the acclaimed champion whom everyone held in such esteem, had been bandied about as a mere bargaining chip. What made it all the worse was that it had worked, and the negotiation had gone through.

As his companions cast looks of pity at the dejected man, Allen shrugged and said, “Rohzenheim is in the middle of an incredibly taxing war. We can’t very well give away precious elven elixirs without proper compensation in return, now can we?”

“‘Compensation’... How’d you even get Lord Helmios here anyway? Wait, don’t tell me...” Cecil took a better look at Helmios and noticed his mussed up hair and appearance. He clearly did not just get off a magic ship.

“That sort of see-through girl who spoke to me before suddenly turned up, saying that His Imperial Majesty had already given permission for everything, and then I was unceremoniously thrown onto the back of some giant bird that flew me here,” Helmios recounted.

“Your immediate presence is greatly appreciated.” Allen inclined his head briefly. *What luck that I picked up a Hero willing to join my party on the Central Continent. You need a proper roster to take on a boss, after all.*

It was just common sense to make thorough preparations before heading into a boss battle. This was all the more true when facing a particular boss for the first time.

If Giamut had refused to loan out the Hero, the fight with Rehzal would have to be put off for years, during which time the elves would then have had to make many very difficult decisions that might have led to further casualties. Thankfully, the elven elixirs had left more than enough of an impact, and the Giamutan emperor did not hesitate to lend out the Hero in exchange for writing off the debt for a thousand Blessings.

“But what will happen with the war situation on the Central Continent without the Hero around?” Cecil asked, concerned.

“Oh, there’s no need to worry about that,” Helmios said reassuringly. “Thanks to those ‘elven elixirs,’ we’ve turned the tide and are almost finished mopping up the dregs of the Demon Lord Army’s forces.”

I bet another reason the emperor agreed to lend out Helmios was because they were already winning. He figured now’s a good time to prioritize building Giamut’s relationship with Rohzenheim.

“Well then, there’s no need to keep standing around here, so let’s go talk in a conference room.” Allen bowed to the queen, then clapped Helmios on the shoulder and steered him out of the room.

“I-I suppose.” The poor Hero let himself be herded out the door, still visibly

shocked at learning that he had been used as a mere bit of leverage.

* * *

The No-life Gamers and Hero Helmios set to immediately get to work discussing how to defeat Demonic Deity Rehzal once they reached the conference room prepared for them. As soon as they sat down, however, the queen, Grand Marshal Siguul, Field Marshal Lukdraal, and Spirit User Gatoluuga filed in as well. They wanted to join the meeting too, as it was no exaggeration to say that the outcome of this battle would determine Rohzenheim's future. The dozen or so faces gathered around the large, round table were all deadly serious.

Before starting in earnest, however, food was brought out, turning their strategy session into a lunch meeting. The meal was partly meant as thanks to the Hero for making the long journey.

"Oh wow, it's been so long since I last had elven food! Everything looks delicious!" Helmios exclaimed before digging into the mostly vegetarian fare. Having been born a commoner, the Hero did not actually know high-class etiquette.

"Speaking of it being a while, there's something I've always wanted to ask you, Helmios," Allen said pointedly.

"What is it?"

"How do you find the time to visit Rohzenheim and Baukis while in the middle of fighting the Demon Lord Army at the Giamutan border?"

He traveled to Rohzenheim to pick up the MP Recovery Rings and to Baukis to hit up the Rank S dungeon there, right? Is he actually playing hooky?

"Oh, good question." Helmios continued stuffing his face with a level of gusto that surprised Cecil and Keel, who had both been formally educated. "Truth is, we aren't fighting every single day of the year at the border. You'd be surprised to know how much time there is where nothing's happening at all."

The Hero continued describing his daily life in between bites. Understanding this to be a rare occasion, the No-life Gamers and elves all listened with interest. Krena was the only one who still had her attention entirely focused on

the food.

As it turned out, everything related to the fighting—including traveling, sharing strategies between forces, and cleaning up afterward—only made up two or three months in a year. The amount of time where Helmios was personally involved in the fighting was even shorter.

“What do you do during the rest of the time?” Cecil asked.

“You’re, uh, Cecil, yes?”

“Yes, sir. I’m Cecil, a member of Allen’s party.”

Helmios had met the rest of the No-life Gamers in the headmaster’s office back at the Academy, but he was not particularly familiar with them as Allen usually did most of the talking.

“All right, nice to meet you, Cecil. So, as for your question. When I’m not fighting, hmm, let me see... There are about twenty Academies in Giamut, so I visit them all and give lessons like I did at yours.”

“Twenty?! There are twenty places as big as that?!” Dogora exclaimed.

Helmios chuckled. “Incredible, right? And that’s just the Academies for training soldiers to fight the Demon Lord Army. The empire has other institutions you may be familiar with as well, such as merchant schools and noble colleges.”

According to Helmios, Giamut had always had military academies, but they were not all that numerous before. Then, when the Demon Lord Army appeared, Giamut converted these academies to specialize in fighting monsters. However, it quickly became clear they were insufficient to produce the number of troops needed, and so the empire built more.

If this were Japan, I guess this would be like having twenty National Defense Academies. Oh, but doesn’t Giamut have three different kinds?

Allen recalled that Rifol, his classmate at the Academy, had told him that the Empire of Giamut possessed both a population and landmass dozens of times the size of Ratash’s. While Ratash only had the single Academy and thus there was no need to make any sort of distinction, the Academies in Giamut were

split into three types based on the curriculum they offered.

- Type One: One-year program. Provides combat training for common soldiers.
- Type Two: Three-year program. Besides combat training, also teaches detailed military strategy and general education.
- Type Three: Five-year program. Provides gifted education for nobles and those with rare Talents.

When Allen first heard this, he assumed the empire was mainly sending its troops through the first type of academy, where they would hammer into their soldiers the basics of combat and the discipline to always obey orders before shipping them off to the battlefield. To his surprise, however, it was the second type that actually met the requirements stipulated in the Five Continent Alliance's policy of "at least one Academy per country." Helmios himself had attended this type of academy.

Helmios continued, "I also take some time to take on the dungeons in Giamut and other countries to gather up gear to make my party stronger. Being the Hero and all, pretty much any country will let me in without any paperwork."

"I see." Allen rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "And you go to all these places with Sylvia and the others?"

"Who's that?" Krena asked, looking up at the unfamiliar name. Apparently she had been listening even while eating.

"Sylvia's the Sword Lord in Helmios's party," Allen replied.

Helmios nodded. "Yep. It depends on the particular mission, but I'm usually partied up with ten people, give or take. Most always, that includes a Saintess, an Archwizard, and a Sword Lord."

Hmm, so everyone at the core of his party has three-star classes. That's how they're able to go crawling in the Rank S dungeon, which I'm sure gives pretty

good rewards.

The most important thing in fighting the Demon Lord Army was winning, so getting stronger was a must. Obtaining better gear was the only way for someone in Normal Mode who had already capped out their levels to grow any stronger. This was something that was also on Allen's mind—but Giamut, as a massive empire, had the resources to have first pick of those with three-star classes, who presumably would also have the strength to get through the Rank S dungeon. Through their efforts, this chosen group would boost themselves further, and once fully upgraded, they could then be sent to the battlefield as a special operations unit.

“Thank you for sharing with us what it is you do,” Allen said. “By the way, you mentioned that the fighting is largely wrapped up on the Central Continent. May I ask for specifics?”

Since Allen Unsummoned almost all the Summons he had stationed on the Giamutan front in order to use their slots for the battles in Rohzenheim, he was entirely in the dark regarding the current situation on the Central Continent.

“We've killed most of the monsters in the ten days since you sent over the elixirs.”

“How many is ‘most’?”

The Demon Lord Army had a tendency to retreat when it suffered too many casualties. This was something that Allen had learned in the Academy and also witnessed himself on multiple occasions.

“I'd say about seventy to eighty percent. The rest withdrew, so we sent out parties to hunt them down. When I left, there were still plenty of elixirs remaining, so I'm sure our forces are still going strong.”

Whenever the Demon Lord Army retreated, it would invariably return. This was why the top brass of the Giamutan military was so adamant on killing the monsters while they were still fleeing.

“Did your forces encounter any demons or Demonic Deities after that?”

The last time Allen asked this question, Helmios could only reply, “I don't know.” This time, however, Helmios had a proper answer.

“Yep. There was one archdemon and three demons. We killed all four.”

“You with your party?”

“Mm-hm. That’s what our party’s for, after all.”

I see. Normal soldiers can’t handle archdemons since they’re roughly as strong as upper-tier Rank A monsters. That’s why Giamut assigned a party to Helmios: to take care of archdemons specifically. And the rare Demonic Deity too, probably.

Normally, Helmios and his party were assigned to fight on the front lines like any other normal soldiers. However, whenever an archdemon or Demonic Deity appeared, Helmios’s group would be sent in as an elite commando unit to take them down.

And when the Sword Lord and/or Saintess with him get killed, he gets a new member.

Helmios said that he worked best with a group of around ten, so there was a system set up to replace any party members who died. In order to maintain this, Giamut kept a very tight fist on its three-star elites.

“Now, my turn. Your...Summons, is it? Can you tell me what they can do?”

“Of course. We will be fighting side by side, after all.”

The No-life Gamers looked at Allen with surprise. Up until now, he had always been rather cagey about revealing his abilities to others.

Oh yeah, we did go back and forth about this quite a bit at my entrance exam. In the end, I did only just show them Mousey and walk away.

Put simply, Allen was willing to reveal information about himself whenever he believed necessary but would withhold it otherwise—that was all there was to it. This time, he had sent for Helmios because he thought the Hero’s help would be paramount to their victory. And so Allen took Helmios through his Summons’ abilities—only the ones that would be useful for this fight, of course.

When Allen finished, Helmios went, “I see.” He could tell that Allen was holding something back, but chose not to probe.

“Is there anything you want me to elaborate on?” Allen asked.

Helmios shook his head. “Nah, I’m good for now. If something comes to mind later, I’ll just ask then.”

“Sounds good to me. Let’s talk strategy, then.”

“Sorry, hold on. There is something I want to confirm.”

“Yes?”

“Everyone here is taking part in the meeting, but it’s only you and me who’re gonna be fighting, right?”

Dogora indignantly leaped to his feet and pounded the table with his fist, yelling, “Whaddya mean by that?!” The plates floated up for a brief moment, and the table bore a new dent.

“What I mean is, you’ll be in our way,” Helmios replied bluntly, not missing a beat.

“I dare you to say that again!” Dogora roared as the rest of the No-life Gamers also turned to Allen with querying looks. This time, however, even Allen had been taken by surprise.

Uh, I wasn’t actually thinking of fighting Rehzal with just the two of us. But I suppose he has a point: I should at least be up front with everyone.

Allen looked at his friends. “I want you to think for yourselves whether you want to come along for this fight.”

“You mean we can stay behind?” This unexpected turn left Krena very bewildered.

“That’s right,” Allen nodded. “Don’t make the decision just yet, though. I’ll tell you everything Helmios told me about how strong Demonic Deities are. Listen carefully, *then* decide.”

Dogora sat back down, his face gravely serious.

Allen then told his companions that Helmios had only managed to kill two of the five Demonic Deities he had ever encountered, and that his party of three-star classes had suffered casualties each time. Helmios listened to the account with his eyes closed, not saying anything. When Allen was done, the conference room fell very quiet as everyone lost themselves in their thoughts.

After a long time, Cecil lowered her hand from her chin. “All right, I realize that this fight will be very dangerous. What do you think are our chances of victory, Allen?”

“Chances of victory” was a phrase that Allen mentioned often when the party faced a Rank A monster or some other powerful opponents for the first time.

“Even with Helmios, it’ll be fifty-fifty. There’s a large spectrum in how strong Demonic Deities can be. And for all we know, Rehzal could even be a Greater Demonic Deity.”

“What’s a Greater Demonic Deity?” Cecil asked.

“As the name implies, they’re even more powerful Demonic Deities. So if Rehzal is a Greater Demonic Deity, we probably have zero chance of winning. Helmios fought one once and his entire party died.”

“And they were definitely more powerful than all of you,” Helmios added.

The room fell silent again. Helmios turned to Dogora, who had his arms crossed, and asked in a quiet, almost admonishing tone, “Dogora, right? Why do you even want to fight Rehzal? It’s not like Rohzenheim is your home, right?”

Dogora paused, then answered, “It is my friend’s, though.”

“I’m sorry, what was that?”

“Sophie’s my friend, and this is her country. And Allen’s gonna fight Rehzal, and he’s my friend too. That’s reason enough for me.”

Helmios looked into Dogora’s eyes, and the boy stared back with a stubbornly clenched jaw. Eventually, Helmios sighed.

“I see.”

“Allen, what would you do if you realized you couldn’t win?” Krena asked in an attempt to shift the mood in the room.

“I’d run away, of course. Right away. No hesitation. In fact, we’ll be having a meeting to basically go over how we can pull out when things go sideways.”

Allen posed confidently when delivering this line, making Keel spit out his drink. “*Pbbfft!*”

With the weighty atmosphere in the room somewhat dissipated, Allen continued. “To be honest, after hearing Helmios’s account, I really can’t guarantee that we’ll win. I feel bad for the elves, but depending on how the battle goes, they might have to wait a few years to get their capital and World Tree back.”

What Allen meant was that he and his companions would go off to train for a few years to get stronger before coming back. And his party members understood this.

“What would happen to the promise with the Sovereign of Spirits, then?!” Cecil cried, standing up in a fluster. “Just how long would I have to wait to become an Archwizardess?!”

Cecil, you said your real intentions out loud with that last bit.

Allen placated Cecil and convinced her to sit down, then replied, “You don’t have to worry about that, because we’ve already fulfilled our promise to Lord Rohzen.”

“Huh?” The other No-life Gamers around the table looked at him in surprise.

“Think back to the conversation I had with him. I promised to save Rohzenheim, not to retake Fortenia or the World Tree. And now, Rohzenheim is no longer under threat.”

The seven million monsters of the Demon Lord Army were almost completely wiped out. The elves would have to do without two thirds of their territory for a few years, but that was about it. They could fight with Castle Lapolka as their border, but with the monsters all dead, they would not see much battle in the first place.

“I see. That makes sense.” Cecil recalled Allen’s exchange with Rohzen and caught on to the point he was making.

I only promised to do the most we could and never went into specific details. After all, I didn’t know whether we’d be able to beat a Demonic Deity.

Since Allen’s goal was to ensure that his companions received their reward from Rohzen, he saw no point in needlessly raising the difficulty of his own accord.

“Of course, we will not ask any further of you. It is as Lord Allen says,” the queen confirmed, speaking on behalf of Rohzenheim with Rohzen still on her lap. She did not seem bothered at all even though Allen had said earlier that the fight was not over so long as Rehzel still remained.

“You think in a really...unique way,” Helmios said with some wonder in his voice. “Being able to hold that attitude when you’re as strong as you are is honestly a little scary. But I suppose it *is* better than just charging in brainlessly.”

“Of course, I said all that, but I *will* do whatever I can to win this fight, as well as to make it as safe as possible for my companions. However, I’m sure there’s no doubt in anyone’s mind that this is going to be an extremely dangerous fight. Now, then—Helmios, before we start brainstorming ideas and whatnot, let me tell you some basic info about our party members.”

Neither Siguul nor Lukdraal said anything in response to Allen. This was partly because they could not ask him to fight and die for them. They could also easily imagine Sophie insisting on accompanying Allen into battle.

To start his introductions off, Allen described the fighting styles of each of the No-life Gamers as Helmios listened attentively. Halfway through, Helmios cut in to say he wanted to hear directly from the Gamers too. So Dogora and Cecil joined in as well, talking about their respective roles on the front lines and in the rear during battle.

A little less than an hour later, Helmios smiled. “Thank you for telling me all this. I think I got the gist. That said, can we continue the rest of this meeting outside? Some things are easier to understand while actually moving around.”

“Are you referring to our teamwork?” Allen asked.

“There’s that too, but I want to know how strong all your companions are and their quirks in fighting. Let’s go out and have a few matches.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” Allen agreed. “Only I got to fight you at the Tournament, after all. Teamwork is going to be crucial once we’re working together.”

Helmios addressed Dogora again, this time in a provoking tone. “You showed

a lot of spirit just now. I'm sure you're strong enough to wow me, right?" He had his hand on the hilt of the sword at his waist.

Without a word, Dogora picked up the battleax resting at his foot and propped it up on his shoulder before following Helmios out of the room.

"They don't seem to like each other very much," Krena whispered to Allen while walking behind them. "You think they'll be okay?"

"Helmios just doesn't want Dogora to die," Allen replied.

Soon, the group had reached a large, open space. Helmios cast an eye over the No-life Gamers. "You've got a Sword Lord and an Ax User as your vanguard... Allen, this is a *really* small party."

"We have one more who's currently back home in Baukis, but yeah, I know."

"All right, let's start with Dogora. First, show me your Extra Skill."

No answer came from Dogora. That was enough for Helmios to catch on. "You're not thinking of fighting a Demonic Deity when you can't even use your Extra Skill, are you?" He drew the golden orichalcum sword at his waist, giving Dogora time to reply, but the boy remained silent. "Cat got your tongue? Okay, no problem. Come at me. I'll beat some sense into you."

Dogora tightened his grip on his ax and charged forward at top speed.

* * *

"I really think you ought to stay behind, Dogora."

"Shut it. I'm definitely going."

Dogora was again lying spread-eagle in the middle of a plaza in Tiamo, his chest heaving violently as he panted from exertion. Today was his third day of accepting Helmios's provocation and charging in only to get beaten down.

Even if Dogora doesn't get his Extra Skill in time, we have to make a decision now.

A tiny part of Allen had hoped that Dogora might learn how to activate his Extra Skill training with Helmios like how Krena had with Sword Lord Dverg, but clearly it was going to take him more than three days.

Allen turned to Helmios. “We were taught at the Academy that it takes some people years to pick up their Extra Skill, whereas Krena did it in one day. Why is there such a large spectrum?” he asked, just in case this Hero, who had taught at so many Academies, had any hints. After all, Allen did not think Dogora would ever swallow his pride and ask Helmios himself.

“Well...it *is* said that those with high Intelligence and MP learn their Extra Skills faster. The general consensus is that activating one’s Extra Skill feels quite similar to using magic. This is why those who use swords and axes tend to require more time. You see the same disparity when it comes to learning to activate normal skills.”

I see, that does make sense. As expected of someone who’s dealt with so many students.

Helmios’s analysis matched what Allen had himself observed. Unlike Cecil, who had received magic tutoring tailored to her ever since she was young, Keel practically had to learn on the job, and yet he still only took two or three months to learn how to use his skills. Conversely, it had taken Krena and Dogora much longer, even though they were taking classes specifically for it when they were at the Academy.

“Thanks, I think I sorta get it,” Allen replied. “But what about Krena, then? She trained with Sir Dverg and managed to activate her Extra Skill in a day.”

Dogora listened in on the conversation without saying anything, still focused on catching his breath.

“Well, there’s also a saying in Giamut that simpler people—or, to be blunt, the stupid ones—have an easier time of it.”

“*Huah?*” Krena, hearing her name, had looked up from biting into a molmo. Everyone else looked at her, surprised at the word “stupid” being mentioned with such bluntness, but a look of understanding dawned on her face, and she said, “I see, I see.”

Seeing no need to drive his point home any further, Helmios continued. “In contrast, Dogora, you’re— How do I put this? You’re stubborn in a way, and you’re also, like, boxed in by your idea of what common sense is.”

“As in, he overthinks things?” Allen offered.

Helmios snapped a finger. “Exactly. So then, what do you want to do? Do you want to continue this? I’m only on loan for seven more days.” The fact that he purposely used the words “on loan” indicated that Helmios was still holding a bit of a grudge about how he had been treated.

So they’re on the extreme ends of the spectrum. Those who learn their Extra Skills fast either have high Intelligence or a flexible mind.

After giving it a bit of thought, Allen said, “Well, we’ve already worked out our game plan, so I suppose there’s no point putting it off for much longer. We’ll head out for Fortenia tomorrow.”

“All right, tomorrow it is.” Cecil nodded.

In the end, everyone confirmed that they would be coming along for the Rehzal fight. They had already worked out a strategy involving all the Gamers and Helmios, so there was no other reason to stay in Tiamo besides holding out hope that Dogora would figure out his Extra Skill. Allen had asked Helmios whether those like Krena with stat-boosting Extra Skills activated could use their skills, but he replied that no precedent came to mind and that it would take time to have Giamut look into it.

After this, the No-life Gamers and Helmios went over their strategy several more times, making sure that it was the best way to use the cards they had up their sleeves.

* * *

The next morning, the queen and generals saw the No-life Gamers off.

“Are you sure you do not need me to come along?” Gatoluuga, Rohzenheim’s most powerful fighter, asked one last time.

Allen nodded. “We’ll manage this by ourselves. Sir Gatoluuga, please stay behind to protect Castle Lapolka.”

“Hmm... Very well.”

The strike force did not include Gatoluuga this time. It was clear that he wanted to join them, but having him stay behind was a tactical decision with

Rohzenheim and the queen's future in mind. He accepted his role, albeit reluctantly.

And the Sovereign of Spirits is still lit up like a Christmas tree.

Allen lifted his gaze from the sleeping creature in the queen's lap to meet her eyes. "Your Majesty."

"Yes, Lord Allen?"

"Our battle with the Demonic Deity will likely be fierce. In the worst-case scenario, the city of Fortenia might be leveled. I hope that won't be a problem?"

"Do whatever you must. Losing the city would be a small price for our country being freed from this calamity."

"Thank you very much. Now we know that we can fight with everything we've got."

Lastly, the queen clasped her hands before her chest and prayed, "May the Sovereign of Spirits bless these our nation's saviors."

Allen's group bowed deeply to the queen. They left the building, then flew off toward Fortenia on the back of their Bird Bs. Helmios was not with them now, as he had already set off yesterday as part of their strategy.

The No-life Gamers reached Castle Lapolka the following evening. Thanks to the elves' dedicated efforts, not a single runaway monster had been left alive within the vicinity of the fortress. Allen's Summons had been helping out as well, proactively harvesting magic stones in preparation for the upcoming Demonic Deity fight and incinerating carcasses wherever asked to. Allen's group spent the night at Lapolka.

Morning came and the group set off again. By evening, Fortenia came into sight. The World Tree appeared truly awe-inspiring against the backdrop of the setting sun, and the closer the Gamers drew, the more overwhelming it became.

"All right, Volmaar, good luck." Allen nodded at the elf who was to break off on his own now.

“Mm-hm. Please take care of Her Highness.” Volmaar mounted the extra Bird B Allen had just Summoned and flew away.

The remaining six continued onward, flying over the walls to enter Fortenia. Their destination was the temple in the center of the city where Spirit B previously faced off against Rehzal. He ought to have still been there, waiting in the queen’s audience chamber.

“There’s no one here,” Cecil murmured while looking down over the large, sprawling city that was large enough to house over a million people.

The city was filled with charred remnants of buildings, likely from fires that had raged when it fell more than two months ago, but bits and pieces here and there provided flashes of what had surely been gorgeous wooden structures filled with the spirit and history of the land. While the Gamers had been expecting hordes of monsters laying in wait, however, not a single thing stirred here. All they found was desolation.

Are they maybe hiding in order to catch us off guard?

Allen’s group landed in front of the temple in the empty city and warily made their way inside. This, too, was a wooden structure, with a lofty ceiling supported by thick wooden pillars that looked like the trunks of trees centuries old, standing tall and proud at regular intervals.

All the way in the back was the altar dedicated to the Sovereign of Spirits. In the center of it was a throne, and this was currently occupied by a being with crimson eyes that were studying Allen intently as he approached. Next to him, Neftira—the demon who had gotten away from the Gamers once—glared at the party as a whole.

“So you’re finally here. Are you Allen?”

“We’re here to kill you, Demonic Deity Rehzal.”

“Kill me, you say? Hmm...” Rehzal continued staring at Allen, sizing him up. “You don’t look afraid of me.”

“Huh? You’re a mere Demonic Deity, and I’m the Chosen One. There’s no way I’d lose,” Allen scoffed, intentionally borrowing the words spoken by Ellie and adopting a haughty attitude.

Demonic Deity Rehzel smirked and slowly rose to his feet. “Ah, so you are fearless because you are ignorant. Apparently even a Liberated would misjudge himself when among humans.”

Chapter 16: Fighting Demonic Deity Rehzal

“Huh? Are you calling me a Liberated?” Allen asked in a voice that made it seem like he was growing irritated not understanding what Rehzal was talking about.

Wow, he’s pretty tall when he stands up. He’s...about two and a half meters tall? At least in stature, he’s not elf-like at all. He’s not holding a weapon, but all his muscles make it clear—he can definitely hold his own in close quarters

All while feigning annoyance, Allen closely studied Demonic Deity Rehzal from head to toe, trying to determine whether to use long-range magical attacks or move in close to throw kicks and punches. Allen always liked to know his opponent’s fighting style ahead of time. Putting together Rehzal’s physical appearance and how he took out a Spirit B with a magical blast, the obvious conclusion seemed to be that he was an all-rounder proficient in fighting at any range.

“Hmph. So you really know nothing.”

Aww, he’s not gonna tell us anything about the Liberated. Oh well. Let’s try pushing his buttons a bit more.

“Look at you, acting like you’re the shit. I know your secret: you used to be a dark elf, right? How’d you turn into a Demonic Deity, huh? C’mon, share with the class.”

“Oh?” The change in Rehzal’s facial expression made Neftira gulp.

“What’s the matter? I gotcha, didn’t I? You attacked Rohzenheim ’cus you want the World Tree or something, right? What a stupid reason. Well, I’m sure you’ve got a good view of it here in Fortenia. Have you enjoyed your stay?”

“Did you hear all that from the elven queen? The World Tree was originally ours. It was the elves who kept it to themselves.” Rehzal was making an effort to speak calmly, but his words were laced with rage.

“That’s not true!” Sophie cried, interrupting the conversation with

indignation. “We elves have always been the ones managing the Tree!”

Huh? Why’s Sophie the one getting angry?

“Hmph, and you’re a high elf, meaning you must be a member of the royal bloodline. Looks like the descendant of the Priestess of Prayer is as ignorant as the foreigner. Do you truly believe what you just said?”

The World Tree was precious to both the elves and the dark elves. Allen, who was not particularly beholden to the Tree, did not fully grasp their circumstances. The certainty with which Rehzal had said that the World Tree was originally theirs did pique Allen’s interest, though. The elven queen had made no mention of this.

Could it be that there really had been an era millennia ago when the dark elves were the ones caring for the World Tree? Or had Rehzal been fed a false account that he now fully believed as fact? There was no way to tell which was the case, but then again, it did not really matter. What Allen had to do here and now remained unchanged.

“I may not know which claim is right, but I do know that you, Demonic Deity Rehzal, led an army of monsters to this continent and are responsible for the deaths of millions of elves.”

“That is something I do not deny. And it is my mission to kill even more in the future. That is the reason I am here. Knowing that, what will you do?”

“Take you down, of course!”

All the No-life Gamers assumed battle-ready stances. Along their way to this location, the party had cast all the buffs they would need. Krena and Dogora now raised their weapons as Keel prepared to cast his Healing Magic.

Rehzal and Neftira were about to do the same, but Allen seized the initiative using Quick Summoning and had General Dora appear out of nowhere right beside Neftira in ambush. Paying no mind to how cramped it was in this temple—at around twenty meters in length, the Summon was knocking off parts of the ceiling with even the slightest of movements—the Dragon B promptly unleashed its Hellfire of Fury. Flames burst from its mouth in a beam that enveloped both Rehzal and Neftira. The wooden temple was unable to bear the

heat, with many of the massive log pillars either breaking off or burning to cinders. In the blink of an eye, half of the monument was destroyed.

<You have defeated 1 demon. You have earned 7,200,000 XP.>

Nice, got Neftira. That just leaves Rehzal.

Neftira had likely died without ever knowing what hit him. His Healing Magic had been sufficient to offset attacks from Allen's Summons last time, but Allen now had Deputize, and there really was no way to heal your way from being killed instantaneously. The notification of Neftira's death glowed faintly on the cover of Allen's grimoire.

"Oh? You killed Neftira in one blow, I see."

When Rehzal's form reappeared from the flames, not only was he unharmed, but even his equipment did not look so much as singed.

Seriously? That dealt zero damage to him?

Noticing his companions faltering at the sight, Allen shouted, "Krena, Dogora! You can do this, but make sure not to take any of his attacks head-on!"

"Okay!"

"Noted!"

Krena and Dogora gripped their weapons tighter, shored up their resolve, and charged in. Rehzal raised a hand languidly.

"Oof!"

"Gah!"

Rehzal's fist collided with Krena's greatsword with such force that the girl was sent flying. The same thing happened to Dogora pretty much simultaneously.

"Keel, prioritize Dogora when healing!"

"Yep, I know!"

Allen was standing in the center of the party's formation, with Krena and

Dogora out front, and Keel, Cecil, and Sophie in the back line. Allen kept a close eye on the front two's HP, using Stone C's Ability and Awakened Ability—and quickly making replacements whenever needed through Quick Summoning—to ensure that they stayed alive. Krena and Dogora had already been buffed with Fish B's Ability and Awakened Ability, so the damage they were taking should have been reduced by sixty percent. However, Rehzel's attacks were so powerful that the two were still at risk of dying from a single badly placed blow, and these blows came hard and fast with the Demonic Deity not even breaking a sweat.

He still hasn't gotten serious, looks like. We've gotta finish this fight before he uses his Extra Skill.

The party had struggled to deal with Glaster's Extra Skill, and he had only been an archdemon. Allen could easily imagine his party getting annihilated should the Demonic Deity activate his. Naturally, he wanted to end the fight as soon as possible.

"Krena, use your Extra Skill!"

"Okay!"

The moment Krena replied, her body was enveloped in a heat haze.

"Oh? You're opening your Extra Gate?"

The expression on Rehzel's face did not change in the slightest despite seeing Krena's transformation. In fact, he even chose to close in on her.

The instant Rehzel turned toward Krena, Allen reached out to Volmaar a kilometer away using Bird F's Awakened Skill. "All right, your turn, Volmaar. Please use your Extra Skill now."

From a distance behind the temple ruins, Volmaar drew his bow with all the strength he had. The moment he activated his Extra Skill, Arrow of Light, a heat haze sprang up around him as well, and his arrow started to glow brightly. The next instant, the loosed arrow weaved its way through the gaps in the rubble before it struck Rehzel's back exactly where his heart was located, making him freeze up for a split second.

Krena closed in during this brief window and brought her greatsword down

on Rehzal's neck, putting her entire weight into the attack while her stats were still buffed by Limit Break.

Her attack landed directly on the defenseless part of his neck! Did that do it?!

"I...see. You're every bit the child you appear, it seems. You fail to understand the difference in our power."

Krena's greatsword had failed to draw a drop of blood from the Demonic Deity's neck, much less slice through it. Before, Krena's Extra Skill had enabled her to breeze through the dungeons in Academy City and the war with the Demon Lord Army, but here, it had turned out to be entirely ineffective against Rehzal. An overwhelming sense of despair assaulted the No-life Gamers.

"Krena! Don't stop! Keep attacking!"

"Okay!"

Allen's shout cut through the sense of powerlessness in Krena's chest, prompting her to continue hacking away at the same spot. Unfortunately, this still did not seem to leave any sort of significant injury.

Ugh, I knew we'd have a hard time based on what Helmios said, but I didn't expect the difference between our Endurance and Attack to be this big.

In this world, damage was calculated based on the Attack stat of the attacking party and the Endurance stat of the receiving party, with the following factors also affecting the overall equation:

- The attacker's weapon's Attack value is added to their own stat value and then calculated with any modifiers such as Extra Skills.
- The defender's armor's Endurance value is added to their own stat value and then calculated with any modifiers such as physical damage resistances.
- Blows that land on vital points have a higher chance of becoming Critical Hits.

Ironically, Krena's Limit Break only made it all the more painfully obvious just how great the difference between Rehzal's and the Gamers' stats truly was. The girl continued battering him with her attacks while darting in and out of range, but the more time passed, the more frustrated she grew. Limit Break could only be used once per day, and the timer on its duration was running out. Krena kept trying to use her other skills as the overwhelming power gap fueled her desperation.

In spite of all of Krena's best efforts, however, Rehzal was brushing off her frenzied attacks with his bare hands like they were mere mosquito bites. His cool composure seemed at complete odds with Krena's swift movements and crazed swings of her weapon.

"I-I can't do it..." Eventually, the heat haze around Krena dissipated, leaving her out of breath with nothing to show for it. Her Extra Skill had timed out.

"Looks like your Extra Gate has closed," Rehzal noted. "A Sword Lord you may be, but you merely stand before the Gate. That is the limit of your power."

Allen perked up. "She's...standing before the Gate?"

"That's right. Those who open the Gate and cross its threshold become Liberated. Those like yourself."

I see, so the term "Liberated" means being liberated from certain limits using the analogy of passing through a door. Wait, does that mean that Extra Skills...

It felt like a puzzle piece had fallen into place in Allen's mind. This world had three modes: Normal Mode, Extra Mode, and Hell Mode. At the same time, there were also special skills usable in Normal Mode called Extra Skills. Up until this fight with Demonic Deity Rehzal, there were two questions that Allen had been wrestling with. One was why "Extra" was used for both a difficulty mode and a type of skill. The other was why he personally had no Extra Skills. Now, he thought he had answers to both.

Extra Skills essentially allowed those in Normal Mode to borrow the power of Extra Mode for a limited amount of time. This was the act of "opening the Extra Gate" that Rehzal had referred to. Allen, being in Hell Mode, was permanently on the other side of this "Gate" and was thus freely able to use powers far beyond the scope of Normal Mode. In his case, this likely corresponded to his

Quick Summoning and Deputize skills, both of which he had obtained automatically upon leveling up and had no cooldown times. There was no need to classify these skills under a separate category.

“Allen, he’s way too strong! What’re we gonna do?!” Cecil cried, jolting Allen from his thoughts. She had been spamming her spells nonstop since the start of the fight and was starting to feel like their plan of action was just not working.

“Mm, he’s stronger than I’d expected,” Allen replied calmly. “We should retreat.”

Rehzel smirked. “Have you run out of your oh-so-clever strategies? But it’s too late. None of you are getting out of here alive!”

His response prompted Allen to also smirk in turn, though he kept it to himself. *Good, he’s completely letting his guard down against us.*

Suddenly, a Beast B crashed down through the ceiling of the crumbling temple. The cerberus’s three jaws, all lined with vicious-looking teeth, closed in on the Demonic Deity’s back.

“*GRRRRR!*”

“Hmph! If you think you can get behind me again, think twice!”

Just before Cerby’s bite could land, Rehzel swatted the Summon away with a single hand, reducing it to bubbles of light.

“It doesn’t matter how many of you small fry come at me—”

Rehzel was turning to Allen to say something, only to suddenly realize that standing on the other side of the fading glow of bubbles was a blue-haired young man equipped with armor and a sword that, based on its golden glow, was clearly orichalcum.

Hero Helmios had been hiding behind the three-headed dog’s back. Caught off guard for the first time, Rehzel became visibly flustered.

“Wha— Aren’t you Helmios?! Why are you here?!”

“That’s right, I’m Helmios. And you’re dead.” Helmios activated his Extra Skill at point blank range. “God Strike!”

“Urgh!”

Helmios’s golden sword ran through Rehzal’s chest, penetrating his armor and protruding out the other side. Using the momentum from his thrust, Helmios slammed Rehzal into the ground, using so much force that the stone pavement shattered beneath him, sending fissures radiating from out the point of impact like ripples and leaving the Demonic Deity half-buried. Silence filled the air.

That destructive power of his is as impressive as ever. Krena couldn’t even leave a scratch on Rehzal and yet Helmios finished him off in one blow.

“Th-That’s incredible...” Krena’s eyes sparkled with admiration.

Helmios slowly pulled his sword out of Rehzal’s body and gave it a swing to flick off the purple blood from its blade. “Looks like your strategy went perfectly. Nice one, Allen.”

“Thanks, you too. We couldn’t have pulled it off without you.”

When Allen had realized that there was no way for his party members to defeat Demonic Deity Rehzal on their own, he decided to rely on Helmios’s God Strike. However, there was a problem: as with most other Extra Skills, God Strike had a cooldown of a full day. Therefore, Helmios’s one blow absolutely *had* to count, the only way to guarantee that it would land was to force Rehzal to lower his guard and open himself up. To this end, the most crucial part of the day’s strategy had lain in ensuring that no one knew of the Hero’s presence in Fortenia. Allen had secretly brought him over from the Central Continent with only a select few in Rohzenheim and Giamut in the know.

Up until this point in the battle, everything Allen had done was to give Rehzal the impression that the No-life Gamers were mere children getting full of themselves after successfully repelling the monsters attacking Tiamo and Castle Lapolka—that they were ignorant of the outside world, having prepared various strategies that would ultimately prove useless, and were completely unaware of the fact that coming here was a suicide mission. Volmaar and Krena activating their Extra Skills and Cecil’s spamming magical nukes were all part of this ruse. Then, at the precise moment those children finally understood the gravity of their situation and fell into despair...that was when Helmios would strike.

Helmios sheathed his orichalcum sword. “Boy, using your entire party as a

decoy was definitely thinking outside the box. And your party actually managed to keep up. You really do have wonderful companions.”

Allen lowered his head. “Thank you.”

While it may have been true that Allen could have carried out this strategy all by himself, the presence of his companions had no doubt improved their chance of success. The point had been to make Rehzal lower his guard once he saw his opponents realize how outmatched they were and fall into despair—which meant the more opponents, the more pronounced this effect. Allen now looked into the faces of each and every one of his party members, internally thanking them for deciding to join him despite knowing the danger Allen would be putting them in.

However, it was still too early to celebrate.

Seriously, how tough is he?

Allen had been keeping an eye on his grimoire this whole time, but no new line had appeared in the log on the cover.

“Helmios, let’s finish this.”

“Finish wh— Oh? Is he not dead yet?”

Just as Helmios was about to redraw his sword, a familiar voice spoke out from behind him. “Hmm, just when did you bring the Hero here? I see now that you did properly prepare for this fight. Thanks to that, I lost one of my three hearts.”

“What?! He’s still alive!” Cecil cried out with astonishment.

Rehzal, who had been stabbed in the chest, slowly rose to his feet. Even Allen was surprised, as he had thought he only needed to deliver the finishing blow. He and his companions hurriedly raised their weapons in a fluster.

“What’s the matter? Are you not going to attack? Very well, then pay attention. I am a man who threw away everything I had to obtain power! I am a man who became a Liberated to take back the World Tree!”

The Demonic Deity’s body burst through his armor as it expanded rapidly. His feet grew thick and large like those of a carnivorous dinosaur, and reptilian

wings sprouted from his back. Two pairs of arms grew out of his shoulders and flanks to give him a total of six arms. By the time his face stopped morphing, no trace of him ever having been an elf remained—he now looked every inch a monster, radiating malice from head to toe and invoking dread in anyone ill-fated enough to behold him.

“Oh, wow, this...this isn’t good.” Helmios suddenly hefted his sword and charged toward Rehzal, shouting back, “I’ll hold him off! You guys run away!”

“Hmph! Big talk for a mere Hero! If you can’t cross through the Gate, you’re nothing against me!”

The Demonic Deity’s three right hands slammed into Helmios, sending him flying so far he shot past Cecil and Keel. He crashed into a wall, which then collapsed on top of him with a thunderous roar. Helmios did not stir after that.

“I’m not letting any of you get away!” Rehzal roared.

Allen promptly used a Blessing of Heaven to top Helmios’s HP back up, then looked Rehzal straight in the eye. “If you’re Liberated, do you not have Extra Skills anymore?”

“So your current attitude is your true self. You were deceiving me.”

“To be fair, we were deceiving each other. You played dead earlier on too, remember?”

“Hmph! All that matters is winning. Isn’t that right?”

After taking Helmios’s God Strike, Rehzal had remained lying on the ground, planning to attack Allen’s group when they least expected it. *And he stopped doing it when I mentioned finishing him off.*

“Not a very good look for someone who’s lived thousands of years to fall for some kids’ scheme only to try to deceive them back, is it? Or did you stop developing mentally when you turned into a Demonic Deity?” Allen tried to provoke Rehzal while also checking Helmios’s condition behind him.

“If that is your attempt to buy time, there’s no point. All your schemes are useless. Now, die.”

The Demonic Deity had realized what Allen was doing, but let him be.

Helmios, now fully recovered thanks to the Blessing of Heaven, returned to the front line.

“Sorry about that just then. Everyone, let’s go!”

“Okay!” Krena’s morale showed no signs of faltering despite witnessing Helmios get sent flying only moments prior.

“All of your struggles are meaningless! Now, taste the same despair my people did!” Rehzal howled.

Helmios’s shout served as the signal for the fight to resume. Krena and Dogora joined the Hero up front; however, the power gap between them and Rehzal had only grown more pronounced since the Demonic Deity’s transformation. At this point, Rehzal did not even bother to protect himself from their attacks. Whenever their weapons landed on him, they merely made a high-pitched metallic ring and left no visible damage.

Oof, this isn’t good. I’m having Stone Cs use Substitute like crazy but they can’t keep up.

Stone Cs’ Ability enabled it to take on the damage on behalf of a companion. As soon as he would Summon a new one, however, it would immediately break down into bubbles of light. For what it was worth, Rehzal was reacting to Helmios’s attacks at least, but he looked the very picture of composure while doing so.

Ah crap, we’re seriously out of our depth. God Strike’s the only thing we had that works on a Demonic Deity. And Rehzal’s gotten serious now. Escaping is gonna be a feat in and of itself.

“Sophie!”

“Yes, Lord Allen?”

“Sorry, but can you buy us some time with Grand Spirit Materialization?”

At this rate, it was only a matter of time before their group wiped. In order to prevent this from happening, Allen wanted Sophie to use her Extra Skill. The idea was to use a grand spirit, which would have significantly higher HP than one of Allen’s Deputized Rank B Summons, to serve as a shield while the rest of

the party fled.

“Um, I’ve actually been trying to do so for the past while, but I’m not getting any sort of response!”

“What?!”

“I-I’m so sorry! This is the first time something like this has ever happened!”

What a time for the grand spirits to be AWOL. C’mon out already!

As the saying goes, when it rains, it pours.

“Okay. Just keep trying, okay?”

“O-Of course!”

Even as Allen was having this conversation with Sophie, the situation continued to worsen. The front line—where Krena, Dogora, and Helmios were desperately parrying each and every one of Rehzal’s devastating attacks—was on the verge of collapsing.

“Mirror, block it!”

Suddenly, General Mirror appeared right in front of the Demonic Deity.

“I’ve heard about this from Neftira. This one can reflect attacks, right?” Rehzal asked before sidestepping the mithril armor and driving a punch straight into Allen’s abdomen. The blow sent him flying, his body hitting the ground with a few bounces, spewing blood.

This whole time, Allen had been waiting for Rehzal to unleash a big magical attack. However, the Demonic Deity seemed determined to do otherwise, leading Allen to suspect that he already knew about Stone B’s Awakened Ability and was being wary of it.

While skidding across the floor with incredible momentum, Allen healed himself using a Blessing of Heaven. Krena did the same and returned to the front line, but the situation had hardly made a turn for the better.

Now, it’s time to make a decision. If I sacrifice myself, that ought to give everyone else enough time to get away.

Just as Allen was considering giving his life up for his companions’ sake,

Dogora crashed right next to him with a sound so loud it reverberated throughout the temple.

“Dogora, you okay?!” Allen called out, promptly using a Blessing of Heaven on his companion.

“I’m good.”

“What a relief... Unfortunately, things are not looking good. I’ll—”

“Man, this takes me back.”

“Sorry, what?”

“Back when we were kids, Krena always had unlimited energy and would run the both of us ragged. Remember how we’d sprawl out on the ground side by side like this and just stare up into the sky?”

“Uh, what’re you doing, Dogora?”

“I’d always thought you were a weird kid, Allen. Turns out you were way more amazing than I ever imagined.”

“Okay, seriously, what is this?” *Dude, it’s like you’re checking off a list of jinxes on purpose. Can you not?!*

“I’ll buy y’all time to run away. Tell my old man I’m sorry I never went home even once since leaving for the Academy. I’ll hold you to that, Allen!”

Leaving those words still hanging, Dogora got up and started running toward where Krena and Helmios were still fighting Rehzal.

“Wait, Dogora, you can’t just— *Dogoraaa!*”



“RAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!” Dogora howled fiercely at the top of his lungs as he charged in at top speed. His mind was entirely blank, blocking out Allen’s words, his worries about his Extra Skill, and even concerns for his family, whom he knew beyond a doubt Allen would take good care of. Even the weight of the adamantite ax in his hands barely registered anymore. The sole thought in his mind, the one burning desire, was to cut Rehzal down with it.

“Hmph, this again? Fine, you can die first, small fry.” The Demonic Deity snorted derisively and clenched his fists.

Right before Dogora reached Rehzal, a heat haze suddenly burst out from his body. “EAT THIIIIIIIS!”

“Huh?”

Overwhelmed for a brief moment by Dogora’s spirited battle cry, Rehzal instinctively raised two right arms to block the incoming strike. Dogora brought his ax down the next moment, putting every last drop of his heart and soul in the blow.

“UARGHHH! H-How are you—?!”

Dogora’s ax slashed right through both arms and dug into Rehzal’s shoulder at a diagonal angle. Rehzal desperately tried dislodging the weapon with his last remaining right hand, but Dogora was suddenly overpowering him. The ax dug deeper and deeper, eventually reaching Rehzal’s chest. This one blow that Dogora had dealt using his Extra Skill, Heart and Soul, managed to bring the Demonic Deity to his knees.

“DIIIIIEEEE!”

“DON’T GET FULL OF YOURSELF, SMALL FRY!”

Rehzal let go of the ax with his remaining right hand, then stiffened his fingers and stabbed his hand into Dogora’s abdomen. His vicious claws smashed through the boy’s adamantite armor and went all the way through his back.

“Pwah!”

“DOGORAAAAA!!!”

Rehzal flung Dogora away like a profusely bleeding rag doll. Allen immediately

used a Blessing of Heaven to heal him, but the boy remained unmoving. Allen ran over to where he had crashed to the ground.

“Dude, wake up! This isn’t funny! *Dogora!*”

The wound on Dogora’s abdomen had been completely healed, but he remained unresponsive.

No, no, no, this can’t be happening.

Allen checked Dogora’s pulse but failed to find a heartbeat. He was not breathing either.

“Keel, use Drops of God on him!” Allen yelled.

“C-Coming!”

Keel, who had been staring in shock from a distance away, jumped at Allen’s voice and rushed over. When he reached Dogora’s side, he placed both his hands on the boy’s chest. A heat haze sprang up around his body as he closed his eyes and began murmuring a prayer.

“Please make sure you bring him back.”

We can’t fail here, not now.

After entrusting Dogora to Keel, Allen turned to face Rehzal. His companions were now entirely defenseless, and he was the only one to protect them.

“Th-That small fry got another one of my hearts!”

On top of chopping off two of Rehzal’s right arms, Dogora’s attack had apparently also destroyed another of the Demonic Deity’s hearts. He staggered to his feet as blood spurted from his wounds in fountains.

“Krena, we’re doubling down!” Helmios shouted, rushing forward.

“Okay! Let’s do this!” Despite being worried for Dogora, Krena remembered her role and fell in step beside the Hero.

In spite of everything he had lost so far, Rehzal’s fighting spirit showed no sign of faltering. He was still deftly handling Krena and Helmios’s close-quarters attacks, Allen’s Summons, Cecil’s spells, Volmaar’s arrows, and everything else that came his way.

At the moment, there was no longer anyone on Allen's side who possessed an attack capable of dealing a decisive blow to Rehzel. The Demonic Deity was focused mainly on parrying attacks from Helmios, the only person present whose Attack stat was over ten thousand. And throughout it all, the arm stumps left by Dogora's attack continued squirming as if they were trying to regrow themselves.

Damnit, if he manages to regrow them, we'll be back to square one.

Allen racked his brains furiously, trying to come up with something, anything that would work against their powerful opponent and break through this precarious stalemate.

"Please, O grand spirit! Please come out!"

All this time, Sophie had been desperately pleading with any powers that be who would listen to her. It was obvious that if there was a key to getting out of this situation, it would be the grand spirits, every one of whom was far more powerful than Allen's Deputized Summons. Sophie continued trying to activate her Extra Skill, Grand Spirit Manifestation, as the situation grew increasingly dire.

"Sophie, that's enough. Focus on hea—"

"It worked!"

Just as Allen was about to tell Sophie to prioritize healing the vanguard, she felt the all too familiar sensation of all her MP being drained. Relief washed over her face.

"Is that...a grand spirit?"

A ball of light appeared in midair and started to assume a form much smaller than that of any other grand spirit Allen had seen so far. More specifically, it looked like a small...flying squirrel.

Sophie's eyes grew as wide as saucers. "Y-You are..."

"Oh hey! Allen did say you never know 'til you try, and whaddya know? I guess it really *is* worth giving everything a go. Ha ha."

"I-Is that you, Lord Rohzen?"

“It sure is, descendant of the Priestess of Prayer. What is it you wish for?”

Before Sophie could answer, Rehzal cried indignantly. “This can’t be! It goes against the principles of the world for the Sovereign of Spirits to interfere in a fight amongst mortals!”

Rohzen turned to him and, in a slightly pouty voice, replied, “You Demonic Deities broke the principles first when you invaded the Heavenly Realm. Man, I’m so glad I held off on becoming the God of Spirits. It would’ve been a bit much for the current descendant to manifest a deity, I imagine. Ha ha.”

So he’s been asleep this whole time because he was holding back his promotion so he’d be able to lend us his power? Ah, so that’s why he’d been glowing all this time! Here I was, making fun of how he’s never awake, when he’s actually been doing his best suppressing his power levels for us!

“Lord Rohzen, please lend me your strength! Please lend me the strength to help my companions!”

A sheepish look came over Rohzen’s face. “Okay, my mistake for posing an open question just now. There’s really only one thing I *can* do for you: bestow you with the Blessing of the Sovereign of Spirits. Ha ha. All right, here goes!”

Suddenly, the flying squirrel began swinging his little hips left and right. Allen and his companions inadvertently found their eyes glued to the unexpectedly cute gesture. The next moment, countless bubbles of light appeared out of nowhere and started to fall gently like snow. When a bubble touched each of the Gamers, they glowed for a brief moment.

“Wh-What is this?! I feel so much more powerful now!” Cecil exclaimed in surprise.

Allen checked his grimoire and nearly choked on his spit. *What on earth?! Everyone’s stats all went up thirty percent!*

“Rohzen! Are you here to foil my people’s hopes and dreams yet again?!” Rehzal roared, hatred dripping from every word.

“Of course I am,” Rohzen replied. “Every time your people try to taint the World Tree with blood, I will be there. As many times as it takes. Ha ha.”

Apparently the story of Rohzen fighting the dark elves alongside the Priestess of Prayer since his early days was true. Rehzel glared razor-sharp daggers at him as he continued to deal with Krena and Helmios's onslaught. Just as Allen was about to brainstorm the best way to take advantage of this opportunity, Rohzen gave him a look as if there was something he wanted to say.

"Uhhh... If I give you too many hints, Lord Elmea might get angry at me, but..."

Without missing a beat, Allen replied, "I won't tell, so you definitely won't get in trouble. Please share your advice."

"There you go again with your baseless claims... Okay, just a little. My blessing resets cooldown times once. Ha ha." The Sovereign then turned his head and played innocent as if implying that he expected Allen to catch his meaning from that brief sentence.

Allen immediately shouted, "EVERYONE! YOU CAN USE YOUR EXTRA SKILLS ONE MORE TIME NOW!"

For a brief moment, his companions struggled to comprehend what he had just said, but Krena, always the one to fully place her trust in Allen, immediately activated her Extra Skill. The usual heat haze flared up all around her body.

"It's true! I've got another chance!" Krena started groaning as she once again tried using her other skills alongside Limit Break. "*Hrrnngh!* Ugh! Why can't I do it?!"

Krena could not afford to waste any more time and charged back in to fight with Rehzel. Despite now being effectively in Extra Mode, her stats were still no match for his. She kept calling out the names of her skills even while getting thrown about over and over. After having fought Rehzel for so long, she just *knew* that she would finally have an advantage over him if she could just use her abilities.

While cheering Krena on inside his heart, Allen called out, "Did it work, Keel?! Did you revive Dogora?!"

Keel shook his head gravely. "I'm sorry." Dogora still lay motionless on the ground, his eyes closed as if in sleep.

“Well thanks to the Sovereign, you’ve now got a second chance! Make it count!”

“You bet! I swear I’ll bring him back!”

Once more, Keel started praying fervently, leaving Allen to take his place as the party healer. With Rehzal as their opponent, Sophie did not have the ability to keep the vanguard fully healed all by herself. As Krena’s impatience peaked, Rohzen suddenly called to her.

“Krena.”

“Y-Yes?”

“Believe in your friend. What did Allen say? Has he ever lied to you?”

In contrast with his somewhat curt manner with Allen, Rohzen was being especially kind to Krena with his advice.

That’s it, that’s good. That’s exactly right.

“KRENA!!! YOU DEFINITELY CAN USE YOUR SKILLS!!!” Allen shouted as loudly as he could, repeating what he had told Krena before.

“O-Okay! I can do this!”

If I can use my skills whenever I want in Hell Mode, it wouldn’t make sense for Krena to become unable to use her Normal Mode skills when temporarily in Extra Mode.

Krena brandished her sword with all she had, believing fully in Allen’s words.

“I have no idea what nonsense you are attempting, but *ENOUGH!*” Rehzal bellowed, clearly annoyed at Krena’s desperate efforts.

“Gah!”

Rehzal landed a hit on Krena, but it was not fatal, either because he was feeling flustered at Rohzen’s appearance or because the damage he had suffered was starting to get to him. Even after taking the hit, Krena continued swinging her sword while shouting the names of her skills.

Uh-oh, Krena’s Extra Skill is about to time out.

“Krena, what’re you doing?! Even Dogora managed to use his Extra Skill!”

“I can use it! I *can* use it!”

By now, Allen’s words were ringing incessantly in Krena’s ears, drowning out everything else.

“More nonsense!” Rehzal closed in on Krena and was about to crush her to death, only to falter for a split second. Just now, he had lost two arms and a heart to a human child that he had considered an insignificant weakling. And so he took a better look at Krena...and a cold chill ran down his back.

Sparks were running down the length of her blade, giving off crackling noises. “Thunderous Sword!”

“Urgh!” The Demonic Deity’s face twisted in pain when Krena’s strike landed.

Oh?! She finally landed an attack that worked on him!

Krena’s skill, buffed by both Limit Break and the Blessing of the Sovereign of Spirits, proved to be an attack that finally exceeded the Demonic Deity’s Endurance. Riding the momentum of success, Krena immediately began attacking together with Helmios as a tag team.

Hell yeah! Things are finally falling into place. Please don’t run out yet, Limit Break!

“Gah!”

Through their combined efforts, the two vanguards managed to chop off Rehzal’s last right arm. That said, Allen noted that Dogora’s Heart and Mind was still significantly more powerful.

“W-We did it!” Krena cheered.

“Krena, you shouldn’t look away during a fight,” Helmios chided. “But well, with how far we’ve cornered him, I think I should be able to finish him off on my own now.”

Just like the No-life Gamers, Helmios had also regained use of his Extra Skill. Panic finally began to seep into Rehzal’s expression.

“I-I became a Demonic Deity after discarding *everything* else. I cannot afford to lose!” Rehzal suddenly spread his wings, generating a blast of wind that almost swept Krena and Helmios off their feet. The next instant, he was flying

high up into the sky, rapidly putting distance between himself and the temple.

Wait, he's running away? Seriously?

Allen soon realized he was mistaken. Rehzal stopped high up in the sky and lifted his remaining three arms. A giant jet-black sphere began forming above his palms. Apparently he intended on obliterating the temple—and Allen's group—with one massive magical attack.

Oh wow, that looks really powerful. That's gotta be his final blow—literally. Could Stone B Reflect it? Wait, or instead...

"Cecil, drop a Petit Meteor directly onto Rehzal."

"What are you saying?! It would level the city!"

"It's fine, Her Majesty gave us express permission to raze the city if necessary. In the first place, your spell and Rehzal's will probably cancel each other out, so there shouldn't be all that much fallout." *I think.*

In the end, Cecil chose to believe him. "Very well," she said before beginning to focus. "Petit Meteor!"

A massive red-hot boulder equal in size to Rehzal's jet-black sphere suddenly came falling down on Rehzal's head.

Ohhh! Petit Meteor's gotten a lot bigger thanks to the Blessing of the Sovereign of Spirits!

"What are you—?! Do you not care what happens to the capital?! *Hngh—HrngaaaAAAHHH!*" Rehzal seemed genuinely taken by surprise at the response from Allen's side. He focused the power of his jet-black sphere on resisting the giant boulder, but found the best he could do was create a stalemate.

"Well then, Helmios." Allen shot a look at the Hero and jerked his head in the direction of the Demonic Deity, who was currently wide open with no way to defend himself. "The target's stopped moving, so the rest is up to you."

Helmios smiled wryly. "How do I put this... Yeah, this seems very in character for you, Allen." He raised his sword and assumed a pitcher's stance as a heat haze sprang up around him. "Here I go! God...STRIIIIKE!"

"No! My heart!"

The Hero's orichalcum sword, which he had hurled with all the strength he possessed, flew straight and true and accurately pierced the Demonic Deity's final remaining heart. With all of them destroyed, his body started giving off a black mist. Both his black sphere and Cecil's Petit Meteor rained down on his head as he lost the power to hold them back any longer.

The two masses of sheer destruction swallowed an entire portion of Fortenia as they came crashing down and ground Demonic Deity Rehzal into the earth.

Chapter 17: Under the World Tree

The two enormous masses swallowed up Demonic Deity Rehzal and pulverized an entire part of Fortenia before their energy dissipated and they disappeared.

“Dogora, I’ll heal you up right now!” Krena cried out as she rushed over. She shoved a hand into her pouch to take out her recovery items, but realized that she had used up everything she had been holding while fighting Rehzal. Even so, she turned it over and shook it violently, hoping that one last piece would fall out.

After Allen left their village, Krena and Dogora’s friendship had developed from the two of them playing knight the entire time he was gone. Forgetting to wipe away the tears streaming down her face, she turned her empty pouch back over.

“Keel, please cast your Healing Magic! I’ve run out of recovery items, Allen! Use yours on Dogora!”

As everyone gathered around Dogora, peering down at him in a circle, Allen said in a calm voice, “C’mon man, we’re about to go over to where the Demonic Deity is. If you don’t get up, we’re gonna leave you behind.”

Even though Rehzal had lost all three hearts, the log message indicating his death had yet to show up on Allen’s grimoire.

Failing to get an answer, Allen asked, “What’s this? Are you sleeping?”

Krena looked between Allen’s and Dogora’s faces several times. “What do you mean, Allen? Is Dogora okay?!”

Allen turned to Keel, who shrugged with a troubled expression.

“Keel succeeded the second time he used his Extra Skill,” Allen explained while looking at his grimoire.

Everyone else caught on and sighed with relief as Krena gave Keel a

questioning gaze.

“I’m pretty sure I did it after receiving the Blessing of the Sovereign of Spirits. I have no idea why he’s not getting up, though.”

“You did it, as in...”

“Yep, I brought Dogora back to life.”

“Really?!”

Without hesitation, Krena lunged at Dogora and started shaking him vigorously.

As he watched on, Allen analyzed the effects of Keel’s Extra Skill, Drops of God. He already knew that the skill’s effect was to resurrect someone who had died, as Keel had been liberal in using it back in Academy City and during the war in Rohzenheim. At first, Allen had wondered whether it was possible to determine the skill’s rate of success. Thanks to having seen so many resurrection skills tied to Intelligence in many of the games he had played in his previous life, however, he quickly put two and two together.

Characteristics of the Extra Skill “Drops of God”

- Resurrects one dead person
- If too much time has passed since death, resurrection is impossible
- The chance of success is 1% for every 1,000 Intelligence (i.e., 3% for 3,000 Intelligence)
- Cooldown time is one day

In all likelihood, the reason why Keel succeeded the second time was because of the Intelligence boost the Blessing of the Sovereign of Spirits gave him. Okay, we’ve seriously gotta raise Keel’s Intelligence above 10,000. Finding him rings that raise Intelligence will be one of our priorities when we go through the Rank S dungeon.

After noting down the results of his analysis and their plans for the future,

Allen closed his grimoire and turned to give Rohzen a deep bow. “Thank you very much, Lord Rohzen. You saved our lives.”

“It’s all good. Ha ha.”

For some reason, the flying squirrel was still perched on Sophie’s shoulder even though any other grand spirit would have already dematerialized by now.

“A-Alleeeen, Dogora isn’t waking up,” Krena cried plaintively as she kept shaking him.

“Dogora’s HP has definitely recovered all the way,” Allen assured her. “He’s choosing not to get up. I’ve no idea why, though.”

“Huh? Dogora...”

Krena stopped her shaking, and the rest of the No-life Gamers looked at Dogora again. Allen’s grimoire told him that Dogora’s HP was back to full; this was why he had been talking to the other boy like normal this whole time.

When Allen leaned in to take a closer look at Dogora’s face, Dogora’s arms shot up and grabbed Allen’s collar. With his eyes still closed, Dogora mumbled, ““Even Dogora managed to use his Extra Skill’?”

Allen cocked his head. “What are you talking about?”

Dogora’s eyes flew open, then he started shaking Allen the same way Krena had just now. “I heard that, Allen! You said to Krena, ‘Even Dogora managed to use his Extra Skill!’”

What is he... Oh right, I did say that.

As it turned out, Dogora had revived quite a while back and had been sulking all the while because he heard what Allen had shouted while he was regaining consciousness.

“That’s, uh... Sorry, man.”

“Hmph.” Dogora let go of Allen and slowly got to his feet. His footing was still somewhat shaky, either due to having just been resurrected or to having used Heart and Soul.

Krena threw her arms around his neck. “Dogora!”

The boy now looked sheepish at the way he had made his friends worry and how they were wholeheartedly celebrating his resurrection. He apologized for not having been there to help out during the last part of the fight.

“So, is the Demonic Deity dead?” he asked.

“Nope, not quite yet,” Allen replied. “We need to go see how he’s do—”

“Are you safe, Princess Sophialohne?!” Volmaar cried as he rejoined the group.

When Volmaar was satisfied that Sophie was fine, Allen declared, “The Demonic Deity is still alive. Let’s go finish him off!”

Krena nodded with a bright smile. “Okay!”

The entire group promptly mounted Bird Bs and flew over to where Rehzal lay.

Whoa, this is pretty bad.

When Allen looked down from up in the sky at the area surrounding where Rehzal had fallen, he found it in a much worse state than expected. He asked over his shoulder reproachfully, “Cecil, don’t you think you went a bit overboard this time?”

“Wha— Don’t make this *my* fault! You’re the one who told me to do it!” Cecil protested, clinching Allen from behind in a choke hold.

“Urgh! I...can’t...b-breathe...”

The devastation below spoke volumes about the combined sheer destructive power of Cecil’s Petit Meteor and Rehzal’s spell. About a third of the city of Fortenia had been erased, replaced with one massive crater. The shock waves from the impact of the attacks had blown out many additional buildings beyond the range of the crater, leaving an even greater radius of destruction.

“Ah, there he is!” Allen told his friends before landing his Bird B. He approached the center of the crater where Demonic Deity Rehzal lay on his back wordlessly staring up at the sky. His entire body was thoroughly mangled thanks to both Petit Meteor and his own spell, with Helmios’s orichalcum sword still buried deep in his left breast. It was a wonder he was still alive.

“Demonic Deity Rehzal?” Allen called out, his sword held up warily.

In a tired voice, Rehzal replied, “There you are. Would you mind leaving me like this for just a little while more?” Clearly, he did not have the energy to even sit up anymore.

Allen studied him for a brief moment, then sheathed his sword. “All right.”

“Wait, what?! Allen?!” Cecil, who had been following Allen, was stunned by his actions.

“It’s fine,” he assured her. “Rehzal’s beyond help, anyway. His body’s already breaking down.”

“Huh?” Cecil took a closer look at the Demonic Deity and noticed that, sure enough, his body was giving off a black vapor in various places. Once he died, he would very likely simply turn to ash instead of leaving behind a corpse, just like Glaster and Yagof.

The wind rustled the leaves of the World Tree within Rehzal’s view. “What a beautiful tree,” he mumbled. “What I would give for my brethren to see it too...” He almost seemed to be trying to burn the image into his vision.

Allen could not help himself. He blurted out, “Demonic Deity Rehzal, was this outcome what you wanted?”

In the end, Rehzal had failed to take back the World Tree and was now fading away into dust. This sounded like the furthest thing from what he had been fighting for, but the expression he had while gazing up at the World Tree was one of satisfaction.

“There truly is nothing better than dying in the Promised Land, is there? However, when I think of my brethren, who still harbor the same unfulfilled dream...” Rehzal’s body continued to disintegrate.

“I see” was all Allen said before he fell quiet again.

“Descendant of the Priestess of Prayer,” Rehzal said to Sophie, “know that even after I die, there will be a second and a third m— Actually, no. This is enough.”

“What do you mean?” Sophie could see that Rehzal’s eyes no longer glowed

with hatred the way they had during their first meeting.

The Demonic Deity made a herculean effort to raise his one last arm toward the sky. “I see. So it’s still out of reach. Olbaas, I did all this for you, but...I’m sorry...”

Rehzel seemed to have recalled something in this moment right before he faded away entirely. However, his voice was too soft for Allen and the others to catch. He clenched his hand as if grabbing at something, only for his entire body to crumble. Demonic Deity Rehzel quietly turned to ash and then simply was no longer.

<You have defeated 1 Demonic Deity. You have reached Lv1. 76. Your HP has increased by 50. Your MP has increased by 80. Your Attack has increased by 28. Your Endurance has increased by 28. Your Agility has increased by 52. Your Intelligence has increased by 80. Your Luck has increased by 52.>

I leveled up? I still needed a ton more XP, though. Wait, this message doesn’t even mention the amount of XP. Uh, do I get one level whenever I kill a Demonic Deity no matter what?

Allen recorded his findings from the fight with Rehzel in his grimoire while absentmindedly watching Helmios retrieve his orichalcum sword from the Demonic Deity’s ashes.

“What’s the matter, Allen?” Krena asked. She recognized the face that Allen made whenever he was deep in thought.

“Hm? Oh, I was thinking that maybe this Extra Gate really does exist, and that whoever walks through it would be able to change to Extra Mode.”

Krena waved her arms about. “They’ll end up with six arms, though!”

I’m sure the Sovereign of Spirits would know whether I’m right or not, but... Allen turned to Sophie to ask the flying squirrel on her shoulder, but he found Rohzen glaring at a spot in midair, a grim expression taking the place of his

usually gentle one.

“What’s the m—”

The Sovereign of Spirits suddenly started shining, interrupting Allen’s question.

“Lord Rohzen?!” Joy filled Sophie’s eyes as she connected the dots. “Are you turning into the God of Spirits now?!”

The flying squirrel purposefully got off Sophie’s shoulder. The light continued growing in intensity and size, and the Sovereign of Spirit’s form also gradually changed into that of a four-legged beast. Apparently Rohzen had relaxed now that the Demonic Deity was dead, allowing the process that he had been suppressing this whole time to finally ascend him to godhood.

Eventually, the light faded, revealing the God of Spirits’ form.

So this is the God of Spirits. He kinda looks like a bear now.

As everyone continued staring at him in a daze, the God of Spirits calmly looked up and said, “Peeking’s rather distasteful, you know. How about showing yourself? Ha ha.”

Suddenly, a person wearing a clown’s mask appeared in midair. “Aw shucks, you caught me. I wasn’t even looking all that much!”

“Wha— Who’re you?!” Cecil exclaimed in surprise. For some reason, she was pretty sure this clown was not a human, even though his mask made it impossible to confirm or deny her hunch.

Only one person recognized the interloper. Helmios cried in alarm, “This can’t be! Why is Greater Demonic Deity Kyubel here?!”

Wait, Greater Demonic Deity? Rehzel was “just” a Demonic Deity, so this guy’s even more powerful than him?

“Ah, Lord Helmios! It *has* been a while. I trust that you’ve been well, sir?” The Greater Demonic Deity made a deep bow that seemed the most superficial thing in the world.

The Hero glared at him with eyes sharper than Allen had ever seen him make. “Why are you here?!” he growled in a deep voice.

“Oh, relax! It’s not like I’d pick a fight when you’ve got the God of Spirits on your side. And I left you alive last time, didn’t I?”

“THE NERVE OF YOU!” Helmios’s hand shot to the sword on his waist, but Rohzen, now in the form of a bear, lumbered forward.

“Why *are* you here, then? Depending on your answer...you know. Ha ha.”

Oh! Is the God of Spirits gonna fight for us? Get him, boss!

“C’mon, I just said I’m not here to fight. But as the Strategist of the Demon Lord Army, I’ve at least gotta take a look into why we lost this time, right? That’s all I’m here for! It’d probably cost me an arm and a leg to fight with the God of Spirits.”

“Oh yeah? Wanna see if that’s all that you’d lose? Ha ha.” The God of Spirits bared his fangs and twisted his face into a ferocious snarl.

So the Demon Lord Army’s Strategist finally makes an appearance. Hmm, does that mean that Rehzel wasn’t even an officer? It took everything we had and a miracle to kill him, and he still wasn’t even an officer?! Just how massive is the Demon Lord Army as an organization?!

“Whew, check out the goose bumps on my arm! But,” Kyubel continued, “it’s too bad. Rehzel actually had potential. Really *sucks* that he got done in. Looks like in the end, he couldn’t manage to let go of the thing he cared about most.”

For what it was worth, Kyubel did emanate a sense of disappointment when he turned to look at the pile of ash that was gradually being carried away by the wind. However, even though it was impossible to see his face behind his mask, it was clear there was no affection whatsoever in his gaze—he was looking at a broken toy, no more and no less.

Allen racked his brains for how to interact with this Greater Demonic Deity who had made a sudden entrance as the rest of the No-life Gamers kept their guard up. Kyubel paid them no mind, keeping his gaze trained only on the remains of Demonic Deity Rehzel.

This is the self-assurance of someone who knows he’s controlling the situation. Oh, he turned our way.

“So anyhoo... One of you’s gotta be Allen, right? Go on, raise your hand!”

No one responded, including Allen.

“Well, *this* is awkward! C’mon, don’t be shy, just step up. On my signal. Aaaaand, forward!”

Allen remained where he was out of wariness, and his companions maintained their positions. Kyubel studied all of them in turn, acting confused.

He’s even acting like a clown. Hmm, how would he respond to this?

“Allen’s not with us anymore,” Allen said with a pained expression, breaking the silence.

“What’s that?” Kyubel’s head swiveled around to face him.

The rest of the No-life Gamers caught on that Allen was up to another one of his acts again and kept their guards up.

“Allen sacrificed himself for our sake when we were fighting the Demonic Deity just now. He...he’s completely gone. Not even his body remains,” Allen lamented, pointing to the crater.

“Wait, are you serious? So he’s been smashed to nothing and is deader than a doornail?”

“I still can’t believe it myself... The Demonic Deity was just too powerful. We have no hope left. Are you satisfied?”

Is he gonna believe this? Please forget about “Allen” already.

“Like hell I would be! *You’re* Allen, aren’t you?! You’re the only one here with black hair! Thanks to you ruining all my strategies, I’m in serious hot water now!”

Kyubel raised both hands up and stomped his feet in a huge fit. Apparently Greater Demonic Deity Kyubel was a great comedian who knew when to play along with jokes.

Aww, it didn’t work. Okay, moving on. Hm, so this is the guy who came up with all the strategies we saw the Demon Lord Army use.

Since he had been exposed, Allen now freely glared at Kyubel impudently.

Seeing this, the Greater Demonic Deity suddenly changed his attitude too.

In a calm voice, Kyubel said, “Well, no matter. There may be more Demonic Deities coming for your life going forward. If you see them, entertain them a bit for me. Right then, see ya around.” He waved goodbye, then from his feet up, vanished into thin air.

So they now know what I look like. Oh well, not much I can do about it.

With Kyubel gone, silence filled the air. Unable to bear it any longer, Cecil blurted out, “Allen, what’re you gonna do?!”

Allen looked up. “Huh? Well... For now, let’s head back. Helmios, wanna come with?”

Demonic Deity Rehzal had been defeated, and so the champions returned to Tiamo where the queen of the elves awaited them. When she heard that Rehzal was dead, she thanked all of them from the bottom of her heart and dispatched subordinates to spread the good news to every city and refugee center.

Thus the curtain finally fell on the terrible days of war that lasted nearly two months.

* * *

Three days after killing Demonic Deity Rehzal, Allen’s group was brought to the queen’s chambers in the morning. She said she wanted to properly express her gratitude on behalf of all of Rohzenheim.

Oh? There are some Elders I don’t recognize from the military meetings.

The meetings so far had only involved the queen and military leaders of Rohzenheim. Today, however, the proceedings also had a political aspect, so the Elders in charge of the country’s administrative affairs were also present.

When everyone was gathered, the queen spoke. “First of all, on behalf of all Rohzenheim: thank you, truly, for saving us and our country.”

“It was the least we could do, Your Majesty. I’m sorry about not being able to stay any longer, though, when there’s still so much left to do.”

“We could not ask any more of you! Not only did you help us defeat the monsters, you also killed a Demonic Deity and returned to us our place beneath

the World Tree. We absolutely must thank you.”

Helmios was also present, but because the queen was looking directly at Allen when she spoke, Allen was the one responding. Being not all that practiced at handling such situations himself, Helmios was more than happy to let Allen navigate all the formalities.

“Um, it was actually Hero Helmios who killed Demonic Deity Rehzal,” Allen said in a firm voice. “Please ensure that all due credit goes to him.”

The generals and Elders burst into buzzing murmurs. This was the first time they had clearly heard that Rehzal had been defeated by the Hero.

Dogora did get one of Rehzal’s hearts, but it was Helmios who destroyed the other two and dealt the finishing blow, after all. So it’s technically correct.

Back when Allen first delivered the queen his report, he had asked her to give Helmios all the acclaim for killing Rehzal. He feared the commotion that would arise from being credited with the defeat of a Demonic Deity would hamper his movements. More specifically, he did not want anything getting in the way of him going to the Rank S dungeon.

During his time in Rohzenheim, Allen had learned that there were still a plethora of things he needed to do. Rehzal had been way more powerful than the Gamers, so much so that it was practically a miracle that they won. If they remained at their current strength, they had absolutely no hope of beating a Greater Demonic Deity. For this reason, their top priorities at the moment were freedom to move however they wanted and getting even stronger through the Rank S dungeon.

“That sure sounds like something you’d say. Ha ha.” The flying squirrel kicked off of Sophie’s shoulder and settled himself in the queen’s lap. Apparently he could now freely switch between his old form as the Sovereign of Spirits—a flying squirrel—and his new form as the God of Spirits—a bear. Since returning to Tiamo, he had started spending more time on Sophie’s shoulder than in the queen’s lap.

With exaggerated modesty, Allen replied, “After all, we’ve already received the best reward we could ever hope for: a promise from the God of Spirits to promote all my party members to four-star Talents.”

“Did I actually say that? I kind of feel like you’re trying to create a fait accompli here...but okay, I guess. Ha ha. You did save my beloved elves, after all.”

It was true that the Rohzen never did promise to give all of the No-life Gamers four-star classes. All he had said was that giving someone a four-star Talent was the limit of his abilities and that he could only raise someone one star at a time. However, instead of refusing Allen’s twist of his words, he actually chose to play along.

Good, good. Just one more thing. Please don’t turn this down either.

“Thank you very much, sir. Additionally, the words that the God of Spirits said when he first started shining are still fresh in my mind. What was it? ‘Thanks to that young man putting himself out there,’ I believe it was?”

“What do you mean by that? Ha ha.”

“Oh, no, nothing major. I’m simply looking forward to seeing what reward I would receive for my contribution to the God of Spirits’ ascension to godhood.”

“A...reward? I think I played a rather large role myself in the fight against Rehzal, though. Ha ha.”

“Oh, yes, so you did! My apologies, I have been remiss in conveying my gratitude. Thank you so much for going to the front lines and fighting to save your own beloved people!”

Allen expressed his thanks dramatically while insinuating that it was the *elves* whom Rohzen had helped and not the Gamers. In other words, the God of Spirits’ contribution to the fight did not count as compensation. The Elders unfamiliar with Allen muttered in displeasure at Allen’s attitude toward Rohzen, with some even outright scowling. They wondered why the queen and generals were making no move to chastise the impudent boy.

After a pause, Rohzen responded, “I’ve said this before, but I will *not* be changing the mode for any of your companions.”

Allen protested, “But the Demonic Deity mentioned—”

“I will not. If I do, Lord Elmea will erase me.”

When you say “I will not” instead of “I cannot,” that’s already an admission that there’s a way to do it. Is this roundabout hint his reward?

“Very well. We will look for a way ourselves.” Allen finally backed off, allowing everyone in the room to breathe a little easier.

Through his fight with Rehzal, Allen now understood how Extra Mode and Extra Skills were related. What’s more, he had witnessed the power of Extra Mode up close and personal. Now he was convinced that seeking out a way to change his companions’ mode was absolutely necessary. The discovery that there was an undertaking beyond going to the Rank S dungeon filled him with immeasurable excitement.

Rohzen sighed. “Goodness... Well, there is one new thing that I’m able to do after becoming a god. Would you be satisfied if I do that as thanks?” He was folding first, as his ability to read Allen’s mind had enabled him to understand just how determined the boy was to obtain one more reward. “I can now promote someone to a five-star Talent. Ha ha.”

“How wonderful! So all my—”

“Only one person. I can’t do it for all your companions. You will have to choose just one.”

Aww, so he can’t do it for everyone. I wonder if it’s because there’s a hard cap on the number of people in this world with five-star classes or if Rohzen just doesn’t have enough power or authority. Either case, if I have to choose only one person, I already know who.

“In that case, please do it for Krena.”

“Huh? Me?”

“Our fight this time taught me just how much harder things get when our vanguard crumbles.”

Even though Helmios, a five-star class, had been fighting alongside their vanguard, Rehzal had still managed to break through and reach Allen. This was an indication that Krena and Dogora did not have enough staying power. Those fighting in the front not only had to deal damage in close quarters, but they also had the very important duty of keeping the enemy from reaching those behind

them. If the No-life Gamers were to fight any more Demonic Deities in the future, strengthening their vanguard was absolutely crucial to the survival of the party as a whole. To that end, Dogora was already promised three promotions, as he was currently a one-star and would eventually reach four. Therefore, Allen decided to give the opportunity to Krena; as a three-star at the moment, reaching five stars would mean gaining two promotions.

“Well, you can just tell me who you want me to do it for when the time comes. Ha ha.”

“Thank you very much.”

“So, do you want me to change all your companions’ classes now?”

“Definitely. Yes, please.”

This would make everyone Lvl. 1 again. We gotta find a place to grind for a while.

“Then, first up, Sophie.” Apparently even the God of Spirits had taken to calling Sophie by her nickname.

“Y-Yes, my Lord.”

“You will become a Spirit Wizardess.”

“Thank you very much, my Lord!”

The flying squirrel floated up from the queen’s lap and started swinging his hips in midair.

Ah, so the animation is the same as when he casts his Blessing.

Just as before, it was a very cute gesture.

Sophie’s body glowed with a flickering light that soon faded away.

Yes! Her class actually got changed!

Allen checked Sophie’s updated Status straightaway.

Name: SophiaIohne
Age: 48

Blessing: God of Spirits
Class: Spirit Wizardess
Level: 1
HP: 362
MP: 811
Attack: 299
Endurance: 329
Agility: 422
Intelligence: 452
Luck: 420
Skills: Grand Spirit {1}, Fire {1}
Extra Skill: Grand Spirit Manifestation
XP: 0/10

Skill Levels

Grand Spirit: 1
Fire: 1

Skill Experience

Fire: 0/10

Sophie’s stats were still quite high, even without the effects of the rings she was wearing. Allen recalled that a normal person at Lvl. 1 only had, at most, two-digit stats. However, Sophie was now starting out with all her stats at three digits.

Oh wait, these numbers are half the value of what they were when she was Lvl. 60! This is incredible!

In addition to half her stat values carrying over, Sophie also had a new field underneath her age that the rest of the No-life Gamers did not have: a “Blessing” where “God of Spirits” was listed. Allen was not sure whether this was the reason for her stats carrying over. His impression was that it had been added some time during their fight with Rehzal, but he had yet to figure out what its effect was.

So she keeps the same Extra Skill, but all her class-related skills are gone. Pity

about the latter.

Sophie’s Extra Skill was still Grand Spirit Manifestation. Changing classes did not replace it or give her an additional skill. The last noteworthy observation was that her elemental magic skills were gone. She apparently would have to relearn all of them from scratch.

I guess we’ll learn more after everyone levels up again.

“Next is Volmaar. You’ll become a Bow Master. Ha ha.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

There were still so many things Allen wanted to test out. He listed them out in his grimoire alongside careful notes about what he had observed so far, then looked up to watch Volmaar’s class change.

Just like Sophie, Volmaar reverted to being Lvl. 1, with his skills all being reset. He also ended up keeping half his stats.

Name:	Volmaar
Age:	68
Class:	Bow Master
Level:	1
HP:	661
MP:	358
Attack:	865
Endurance:	570
Agility:	364
Intelligence:	241
Luck:	392
Skills:	Bow Master {1}, Keen Sight {1}, Bow Mastery {6}
Extra Skill:	Arrow of Light
XP:	0/10

Skill Levels

Bow Master: 1
Keen Sight: 1

Skill Experience

Keen Sight: 0/10

I see, the same thing happened to him. I guess that means the class change process lets people keep half the stats by default, and it has nothing to do with the Blessing of the God of Spirits. That's great! We can always do with more long-distance damage output.

Just as he had done with Sophie, Allen recorded Volmaar's Status without the effect of his rings. Thanks to keeping half his stats, Volmaar's ability to deal damage from afar had gone up quite significantly.

"We'll keep going. Next is Krena. Ha ha."

"Please and thank you!"

Oh? What's above Sword Lord?

The God of Spirits swung his hips once more.

"Let us see!" The rest of the Gamers crowded around Allen to peer into his grimoire too.

"Sword King! Krena, you're a Sword King now!" Allen whooped, absolutely loving how the class name sounded.

Name: Krena

Age: 14

Class: Sword King

Level: 1

HP: 1,220

MP: 477

Attack: 1,220

Endurance: 856

Agility: 824

Intelligence: 487

Luck: 598

Skills: Sword Lord {1}, Slash {1}, Sword Mastery {6}
Extra Skill: Limit Break
XP: 0/10

Skill Levels

Sword King: 1
Slash: 1

Skill Experience

Slash: 0/10

Damn! She's only Lvl. 1 and her Attack is already over 1,200! She can probably already kill a murdergalsh by herself with these stats!

"So this is..." Krena opened and closed her hands a few times, checking the change in her own strength.

Rohzen nodded at the sight. "Yep, your stats did just change drastically. Watch out, because things will feel quite different from before. All right, next is Dogora. You're becoming a Berserker."

"Berserker?!" *Oh my god, I'm so hyped! He's actually a freaking Berserker!* Allen was getting more surprised and excited than all his other companions combined. He had always associated the Berserker class with using the ax, so he very strongly agreed with this line of class promotion.

At the same time, a smirk also spread across Dogora's face. "Oh? Berserker? I like the sound of that." Perhaps the term "berserker" just had a certain ring that resonated with the hearts of boys.

Dogora's body lit up in response to the God of Spirits' shimmying.

Name: Dogora
Age: 14
Class: Berserker
Level: 1
HP: 661

MP: 358
Attack: 871
Endurance: 573
Agility: 362
Intelligence: 241
Luck: 392
Skills: Berserker {1}, Full Might {1}, Ax Mastery {6}
Extra Skill: Heart and Soul
XP: 0/10

Skill Levels

Berserker: 1
Full Might: 1

Skill Experience

Full Might: 0/10

As with all the others, Allen copied down Dogora’s Status in his grimoire. Since Dogora had started off with a one-star class, he still had two more promotions left.

“Next is Cecil. You have two choices: Sage and Archwizardess. Which do you want?”

Hey, our first branch promotion. So they have that in this world too.

“Huh? So it’s not just Archwizardess? Hmm...which should I get?” Cecil raised her hand to her chin thoughtfully.

“I would personally recommend Archwizardess,” Allen advised. “Since we already have Sophie and Keel for healing. And me too, if it comes down to it.”

Allen wanted Cecil to go with the class that focused purely on dealing magical damage. His hope was that this would give her access to more powerful AoE spells.

“You think so? Okay, I’ll go with that, then. It’s what I’d been dreaming of all this time, anyway.” Cecil nodded at Rohzen.

“Okay, Archwizardess it is, then. Here goes.”

Cecil glowed for a brief moment.

Name: Cecil Granvelle
Age: 14
Class: Archwizardess
Level: 1
HP: 514
MP: 868
Attack: 330
Endurance: 421
Agility: 510
Intelligence: 1,195
Luck: 480
Skills: Archwizardry {1}, Fire {1}, Sparring {3}
Extra Skill: Petit Meteor
XP: 0/10

Skill Levels

Archwizardry: 1
Fire Magic: 1

Skill Experience

Fire Magic: 0/10

Yep, Cecil’s always had low HP and Endurance, so the boost she’s getting from this class change is honestly very welcome.

“I’m an Archwizardess now? Allen, let me see!” Cecil bumped up against Allen again to have a look in his grimoire. She seemed almost beside herself having achieved her dream of many years.

“You sure are. Here you go.” Allen stepped aside a little to make space for her.

“It really does say Archwizardess! I’ve become an Archwizardess! Guh heh heh!”

The No-life Gamers had been chattering excitedly while checking Allen’s grimoire this whole time, but of course, no one else could see the tome. Consequently, the elves had been watching them with rather puzzled expressions.

“Next is Keel,” Rohzen announced. “You also have two choices: Saint and Monk.”

“I get to choose too? Hmm...”

I see, one is specced entirely for healing while the other would give him fighting abilities too.

“You *are* the Saint of Fortune—how about just sticking with Saint?” Cecil chortled.

Because of how much Keel loved money, his friends had given him the nickname “Saint of Fortune” as a joke. Cecil was now recommending that he choose Saint because of the name.

“Wha— That again, Cecil?! I so am not!” Keel protested.

“You so are,” Cecil returned.

Allen stepped in. “The name thing aside, it’d be a great help if you’d choose the one focused on healing.” He was gently pushing Keel to choose Saint for the same reason he wanted Cecil to choose Archwizardess.

All-rounder classes are great for clearing trash mobs, but not so much for powerful opponents like Demonic Deities.

During the battle with Rehzal, aside from Helmios and Rohzen’s help, Dogora’s Extra Skill and Krena’s ability to use skills while her Extra Skill was active had contributed greatly to their almost miraculous victory. When the Gamers faced a Demonic Deity again, the key to victory would lie not in praying for another divine intervention but in having mastered their individual specialized roles.

“I see. Okay, I’ll take Saint, then.”

“You got it,” Rohzen nodded. “Here goes.” He did his little dance once more.

Name: Keel
Age: 13
Class: Saint
Level: 1
HP: 394
MP: 750
Attack: 299
Endurance: 421
Agility: 480
Intelligence: 661
Luck: 602
Skills: Saint {1}, Healing {1}, Sword Mastery {3}
Extra Skill: Drops of God
XP: 0/10

Skill Levels

Saint: 1
Healing: 1

Skill Experience

Healing: 0/10

“Whoaaa!” Keel was overjoyed at becoming a Saint. He patted himself all over before checking the change in his stats.

“All right, that’s everyone.” *All of them have gotten a significant boost, and it doesn’t look like we’ll have to change up our teamwork much.*

Krena: Sword King
Cecil: Archwizardess
Dogora: Berserker

Keel: Saint

Sophie: Spirit Wizardess

Volmaar: Bow Master

As Allen gazed at his companions, feeling moved at how much stronger they had become, the God of Spirits said something unexpected.

“There’s one more person left. Right, Helmios?”

The Hero looked up. “What? Me?”

Oh? He’s giving the Hero a class change too? I guess this is his reward for helping with fighting Rehzel.

“This is partly your reward for helping kill Rehzel, but your class change is also something that Lord Elmea asked for. Hold on, I’ll switch over.”

“I’m sorry, what? The God of Creation asked for my class change?”

Allen’s group fell silent as they watched the exchange between Helmios and the God of Spirits.

What did he mean by “switch over”?

The flying squirrel that had been hovering in midair this whole time suddenly went limp and froze up. The next moment, a very different voice—an androgynous one that went directly to the cores of everyone listening—spoke up.

“I am Elmea, the God of Creation. Hero Helmios, you have done well in your fight to protect my people. I thank you, truly.”

“Wha— Lord Elmea?!” Keel gasped.

So Elmea basically took over Rohzen’s body?!

While everyone else was still dumbstruck, Helmios alone managed to converse normally with Elmea.

“Of course, I was only doing what I had to.”

“Helmios, you have more than earned your right to a promotion after the

countless tribulations that you have undergone. Continue protecting my people as Hero King.”

The God of Spirit’s hand pointed at Helmios, then a warm light enveloped him. When the light faded, he reappeared looking exactly the same. However, his class had, sure enough, changed into Hero King.

“Looks like your new class is Hero King. Ha ha.”

As soon as Helmios’s promotion was complete, the God of Spirits’ voice returned to normal. The God of Creation had apparently left.

I see, so the class above the five-star “Hero” is the six-star “Hero King.” And the God of Creation has the power to promote someone to a six-star class.

Of course, Allen made a note in his grimoire about the class change facilitated by the God of Creation.

“I’m now...a Hero King...” Helmios murmured, staring at his hands.

“What’s on your mind, Helmios?” Allen asked.

“I was just recalling what you said to me before. You were right. There really was something beyond despair.”

Ah, from the tournament at the Academy.

While Allen’s group had been receiving their new classes and rejoicing with each other, Helmios had looked on with a distant gaze, appreciating the fact of this new way of getting stronger. And now, he himself had a new class, having been born anew as a Hero King.

Allen nodded. “That’s right. I’m sure there’s still plenty out there to enjoy and look forward to. That’s why you have to keep on searching. If you don’t, then you will never surpass despair.”

“Plenty to enjoy... That definitely sounds like something you’d say.” Helmios chuckled.

Honestly, the Hero getting a power up is a huge help. Now I can leave the Central Continent to him without worry.

Allen expected Helmios to continue doing what he was doing regardless of his

class change. As for himself, Allen planned on first paying Ratash a visit, then immediately heading to Baukis to enter the Rank S dungeon. His short-term goals for the immediate future were to secure full sets of equipment for his companions and to help them max out their levels and skills again.

We should regroup with Meruru and discuss our plans going forward. I wonder how she's doing. Baukis was attacked by a million monsters, right? I'm sure she's made a huge name for herself by now zooming around the battlefield in a cool golem.

"Your Majesty, do you know how things went with Baukis?" Allen asked.

"There is no cause for concern," she replied. "A while ago, I received contact from the Baukisian emperor that they have gained the upper hand in their war against the Demon Lord Army thanks to our elven elixirs."

"I am glad to hear it." Allen breathed a small sigh of relief.

"However," the queen added, now looking somewhat troubled, "he did ask me for more elixirs."

Oh? Is Baukis getting greedy? That's convenient for us. I think we just got our ticket into the country.

Allen's companions noticed the look on his face. It was the face he made whenever he had a devious idea.

"Please tell the emperor that if he wants more elixirs, there are conditions he must accept."

"Hm? V-Very well. I shall pass it on. Are you sure you will not be staying here in Rohzenheim a while longer, Lord Allen? If possible, we want to host a celebration in your and your companions' honor for saving us and leading us to victory."

"Your Majesty, I am sorry, but the war with the Demon Lord Army is not yet over, and there is much to be done. Our plan is to return to the Central Continent tomorrow."

We gotta leave before they find out how badly we trashed Fortenia.

The queen expressed her disappointment but did not press any further.

Thus, the war against millions of monsters, the demons, and the Demonic Deity commanding them ended as a resounding victory for Rohzenheim. With one adventure over, the No-life Gamers now turned their attention toward the Rank S dungeon located within the Empire of Baukis.

Side Story 1: Rehzel's Past

This is a story that happened one thousand years ago on the Southeast Continent.

On this continent was a large variety of biomes and climates, ranging from muggy swamps to dense forests to sprawling plains. On its eastern edge lay a giant, expansive desert, and in the middle of the desert grew a massive, solitary tree. Greenery bloomed in abundance around this tree, and it was all protected by a towering wall.

Inside the wall lived the dark elves, tilling their fields and nurturing the greenery. This place was known to some as the Village of the Dark Elves. Beside the giant tree in the center of the village—which was less than half the height of the World Tree—stood the wooden residence of those who ruled this place. A little over a dozen elves were currently gathered in one of the rooms of this building.

One dark elf sat on a raised pedestal in the far back of the hall. His heavily wrinkled face and sparse silver hair made it obvious he was very advanced in years. Curled up between his crossed legs lay a weasel with black fur, sleeping peacefully. This man was the king of the dark elves.

Other dark elves around the same age sat before him, ranting with great agitation.

“Your Majesty, please show us the letter!” one of the Elders said.

“V-Very well. Here.”

When the Elder saw the handwritten letter for himself, his eyes flew wide open. “My king! You must not agree to this! We must not restore diplomatic relations!” His voice quivered with rage as he crumpled the piece of paper in his hands.

This was the dark elven Elder Council. Unlike the matriarchal elves, the dark elves’ society was patriarchal. The king listened to the Elders repeatedly

shouting to not agree to the terms of the letter with a conflicted look on his face.

The day before, an elven emissary had crossed the sea and arrived at the Village of the Dark Elves, asking to see their king. The guards had refused to even let him into the village, so he passed them the message he bore—a proposal to restore diplomatic relations between the elves and dark elves penned by the elven queen herself.

In order to understand why the dark elven Elders were so vehemently against this suggestion, one had to know the history between the two races. After the appearance of the Priestess of Prayer several thousand years prior, the dark elves had begun to suffer defeat after defeat in their war against the elves. Then, two thousand years ago, the war culminated with the dark elves getting captured down to the very last man—fewer than ten thousand of them remained by this time—and being forced to choose between peaceful surrender or exile from the Northeast Continent.

As one, the dark elves chose exile. And so they traveled by boat to the Southeast Continent. Refusing to associate with the other societies already settled on the continent at the time, they instead carved out an existence for themselves here in this desert using Spirit Magic.

“They did nothing for us and left us to rot for a thousand years!”

“They’re trying to spy on us to gauge our strength! No, they’ve been spying on us this whole time!”

“Letting the envoy into the village is absolutely unthinkable!”

“They’re trying to create pretext to attack us! Your Majesty, you must reject this!”

After listening to the Elders for a while, the king asked, “So you are all of one mind to turn their offer down?”

“Yes,” one of the Elders replied without missing a beat. “Every line of it. No compromises!”

The letter from the elven queen had suggested rebuilding diplomatic relations by mutually setting up embassies and periodically sending each other delegates.

In addition to politics, she had also suggested reopening economic ties by establishing trade routes. It was the Elders' vehement opinion, however, that they should turn down both the political and economical overtures—in short, the entire proposal.

“The reason they're approaching us with this is surely because they see us recovering our strength and are afraid!” one Elder asserted with all the others crying, “Hear, hear!” in agreement.

Members of the dark elf race tended to be rather aggressive and warlike. And the more familiar an individual was with their past, the deeper their hatred of the elves. Over the past one thousand years, they had brought their population back to over a hundred thousand, all while nursing this animosity inside their hearts. Just like the elves, dark elves also had low fertility rates, so it was through much effort that they had managed to increase their population to its current numbers, and the elves surely felt threatened by this.

It was not as if the Elders' reaction to the elven queen's sudden offer to rebuild relations was entirely unfounded. In contrast with the dark elves' propensity for war, the elves were skilled in political maneuvering. Gaining a window into the current situation of the recovering dark elves actually was one of the reasons behind the queen's message.

“Why haven't you said anything this whole time, Rehzal?! You agree with us, do you not?!” an Elder asked, turning around.

There was a man present at the meeting who did not share everyone else's ash-gray hair and dark skin. He did have dark skin, yes, but his hair was silver and his eyes gold. The most conspicuous difference was that, while the Elders all looked at least seventy years old by human standards with some looking closer to a hundred, this man alone looked like a strapping forty-year-old.

This man, Rehzal, was a high dark elf, just like the king of this village.

“Personally, I'm for accepting this offer and reestablishing relations, on one condition: that they create a facility for us dark elves to meet the end of our lives under the World Tree. I'm sure the elves are prepared to do some negotiating.”

“A condition?! You used to be so completely insistent on total war! Having a

child has made you soft, *weak!*”

The Elder who spoke was so incensed that he threw the crumpled letter in his hand at Rehzal’s feet. He and the others redirected their anger from the king to this man, furious with him all the more since they had expected him to be a staunch proponent of their side.

“Eep! F-Father, I’m scared...” The dark elf boy at Rehzal’s side gasped and clung to him, frightened by the throwing of the letter.

Without looking at either the letter or his son, Rehzal said in a chiding tone, “Don’t be scared, Olbaas. You have already turned fifteen this year. You must consider what is best for the village.”

The age of maturity for a high dark elf was fifty, but Rehzal brought Olbaas with him to these Elder Councils regardless.

“Y-Yes, father.” Despite the fact that he was still quivering, Olbaas shored up his courage. The boy did not have permission to speak, but he continued watching the proceedings with a serious face.

* * *

Half a day passed. The sun was about to sink into the horizon, but the Elders were still locked in hot debate. They had already reached a consensus that they would be turning down the proposal in its entirety and were now discussing their approach to dealing with the elves going forward.

Rehzal, who had been sitting cross-legged, felt a weight on his lap. “Olbaas?” He looked down to see his feet being used as a pillow by his sleeping son, who was also hugging the black weasel like a body pillow.

“Zz...zz...”

The sight brought a smile to Rehzal’s lips, but he quickly straightened his face as he was still in an important meeting. He slowly reached out to shake Olbaas’s shoulders to wake him, but his hand never reached the boy.

“I’m terribly sorry, Lord Rehzal! I’ll put Young Master Olbaas to bed right now!”

One of the servants in the room noticed Olbaas’s state and picked him up,

taking him further and further from Rehzal's reach.

"Ah..."

In the end, the meeting concluded that day without the Elders having come up with a concrete plan for how to proceed with the elves.

* * *

After the meeting was finally adjourned, Rehzal returned to his room. He sensed someone's presence in one of the corners despite the room appearing empty.

"Kyubel."

"Oh, well done! You've found me, I guess. Hee hee! Oh come on, don't glare at me so."

"Hmph."

A man wearing a clown's mask and costume suddenly slid out of the darkness. This was Kyubel, the one who would become a Greater Demonic Deity and assume command over the entire Demon Lord Army a thousand years later.

"Hee hee, looks like you still have your guard up against me. So then, how'd the Council meeting go? Did they come up with a plan? You asked for a day."

Kyubel's overly dramatic gestures and frivolous attitude cut a sharp contrast with Rehzal's wary shrewdness.

"Of course they didn't," the first dark elf scoffed bitterly. "In the end, we don't have that many options, weak as we are."

There was still a massive gap in strength between the elves and dark elves. Even if the Elders continued their discussion, Rehzal highly doubted they would ever reach a proper plan of action.

"My, that sounds tough."

"The king and Elders have all grown too old. What can they even do now at their age?"

Rehzal had stayed for the entirety of the meeting, but he was convinced that all the time the Elders were spending was for nothing.

“That’s worrying, all right. So, what’ll you do? Are you gonna turn me down? Aww, being turned down hurts.”

“I am not turning you down. You will be giving me power, yes?”

“Of course! If you come with me, you’ll gain so much power you won’t even! *UMPH!* Power! Yeah!”

“Very well. Give me that power. I will erase the elves and— Never mind.”

“C’mon, you gonna leave me hanging?”

Rehzel was about to say, “show Olbaas the World Tree,” but he swallowed those words back. He did not fully trust the clown before him, not with the way he was acting. Rehzel did not see the need to tell him about his son.

“Well, shall we go? You’re done with this village, right?”

“I suppose I am.” For a split second, Olbaas’s face came to mind unbidden.

“Huh? Don’t you need to say goodbye to family and friends? Didn’t you have a son?” Kyubel asked him, almost as if he could read Rehzel’s thoughts.

“No need. Let’s go.”

The urge to see his sleeping son one final time flitted across Rehzel’s mind, but he banished it with a shake of his head. He was afraid that if he did, his resolve would crumble.

And so Rehzel left the Village of the Dark Elves behind.

* * *

Rehzel followed Kyubel through the desert, trudging his way through the sand by the light of the stars.

“How far are we walking?” he grumbled.

“Well, you know what? I think this should be good.” Kyubel turned around to face the other man, then dug out a ball from his pockets. It was black, so dark in color that one could tell it was black even at night.

“That’s what’s going to change me into a Demonic Deity?” Rehzel asked doubtfully.

“You bet! It’s a very valuable Demonic Deity Stone. There are only a few of them!”

Despite saying that they were valuable, Kyubel started tossing the Demonic Deity Stone like it was a beanbag.

“Well, what’re you going to do with it? Whatever it is, hurry it up.” Rehzal was starting to get annoyed with the intentionally misdirecting way Kyubel spoke and acted.

“Well, I’ll do...this”

Stab.

“What are you... ARRRGGGHHH!”

Still smiling, Kyubel jabbed his hand into Rehzal’s chest, physically depositing the Stone inside. Blood gushed out like a fountain and the high dark elf fell to the ground. Right away, his body began changing dramatically, swelling up so significantly he burst out of his clothes.

“Hmm, your heart split into three. That’s interesting. Quite rare, I do say!” Kyubel muttered to himself as he observed what was happening with the placidity of a researcher conducting an experiment.

“A-AAHHH! GUAAHHH!”

Rehzal, naturally, heard none of what Kyubel was saying. He was busy growing a horn and two more pairs of arms as his legs turned reptilian. The eyes in his increasingly evil-looking face no longer shone with the light of intelligence. The things he held to be important in his heart seemed to be breaking down one by one, almost as if his very heart was molding itself to the alterations to his body.

“Hee hee, so you’ve thrown away everything! You’ll now be working for *my* plan. Time is running out. Our long-awaited Demon Lord will be born soon.”

Kyubel danced jauntily as he continued watching Rehzal’s agonizing transformation into a Demonic Deity.

Side Story 2: Banquet of the Spirits

The No-life Gamers were still in Fortenia after having defeated Rehzel. Since their Talent changes were wrapped up, Allen had thought they would have already set off for the Empire of Baukis by now, where they would have regrouped with Meruru and dived straight into the Rank S dungeon. However, the elves—especially the queen—insisted on hosting a banquet in their honor for saving Rohzenheim when it had been literally one day away from being completely wiped out. They were so serious about it that they decided to hold the banquet underneath the World Tree, a choice location normally reserved for festivities dedicated to the gods.

Allen's group wiped out all the monsters in the vicinity of Fortenia to level up a bit after changing classes, therefore making it safe for the elves to return to their capital. The sun was setting when the queen, Elders, generals, and the rest of the elves in the queen's service arrived. The specific venue for the banquet was to be the royal audience hall, the same one where the No-life Gamers had fought Rehzel.

"A toast—to Lord Helmios, Lord Allen, and everyone in his party for saving us in our moment of greatest need!" the queen declared in a voice that carried throughout the hall, raising her glass. "It is only thanks to them that we overcame our tribulations and stand here today, alive and well!"

Clap, clap, clap.

"How blessed we are. Truly blessed indeed. It was a miracle." Tears streamed down Field Marshal Lukdraal's face as the queen's words drove home the fact that they had indeed won the war and come out the other side. Being someone in a position that required him to stay strong and authoritative, it was only in this moment that he finally allowed himself to breathe easy.

"Lord Allen, may we have a word from you, please?" the queen asked, interrupting Allen's analysis of his companions' new Statuses. His contribution had been far too great to not ask him for a speech of his own.

He walked up beside her and addressed everyone. “Thank you so much for having us at this celebration. The capital ended up taking severe damage during our fight with the Demonic Deity, but we will naturally help with the restoration. We now know we can achieve great things when we work together, and I am glad we will continue doing so!”

His implication was that all blame for the damage to the city lay with the Demon Lord Army and not his group. The other Gamers all smiled wryly.

“Thank you for even going so far as wiping out the remnants. Now we elves can truly say that we are home.”

The Hero was also asked for a few words, followed by Grand Marshal Siguul. One of the Elders stood up to speak on behalf of the others, then the banquet finally kicked off. Many elves approached Allen one by one to express their gratitude as he nursed his fruit juice—Allen did not drink alcohol. When he looked outside, he noticed it was already dark out.

“Huh? What’re those?” Allen realized that despite the darkness, he could still see the World Tree quite clearly. This was due to countless dots of light of varying hues that were flying with irregular circular motions around the massive trunk.

“You’re looking at the spirits,” Sophie replied. “Some of them live in the World Tree, some have come here from other parts of Rohzenheim. Since the elves are celebrating our long-awaited return to Fortenia, the spirits are resonating with our emotions and participating along in their own way.”

Oh, and here I was thinking they were this world’s equivalent of fireflies.

“I see. So while we’re having a banquet of victory here, they’re having a banquet of the spirits there, I guess you can say. So this was why the elves wanted to do this underneath the World Tree.”

“That is so. We elves live alongside the spirits, and they with us.”

This scene perfectly illustrates the bond between them.

“Do you think I’d be able to get a closer look at them?”

Cecil looked up at this. “You’re asking to see the pretty, faraway lights up

close? I never thought you'd have an interest in such things, Allen." To her understanding, Allen had no interest in money nor entertainment and did not appreciate things that were merely decorative.

"What? We're going somewhere?" Krena walked over, both hands laden with food. She and Dogora had been much more occupied by the food than the view outside.

"That's right," Allen nodded. "It's a good opportunity. Let's go see the spirits."

"Ohhh! Spirits!"

We should probably at least let Lukdraal know where we'll be going. It would be strange for the guests of honor to suddenly disappear.

When Allen went to inform the field marshal, the man replied, "What a wonderful idea! Please, do go greet the spirits!" He looked even happier about Allen gaining an interest in the spirits than about Allen taking part in the banquet.

With that, all the Gamers left the venue and started picking their way through the night. The temple was not all that far from the World Tree, so it did not take them long to reach it. As they approached, they began seeing brilliantly shining figures of tiny animals and children floating about in midair.

"This is...pretty cool," Dogora murmured.

"Wow, you actually know how to appreciate this?" Allen asked, copying Cecil's tone from earlier.

"The hell? That ain't a compliment, is it?"

"It, uh, definitely is." Allen looked back at the spirits. "Oh, I get it now. The different colors indicate which element a spirit is."

Just as Allen's group was studying the spirits, the spirits were studying them right back while giggling merrily. They seemed to like Sophie most judging by the fact that more gathered around her than the rest of the group.

"By the way, Sophie. When you become a Spirit User, you'd be contracting with spirits like these, right?"

The story went that the Priestess of Prayer had contracted with Rohzen while

he was still very young. Unlike Summoners, Spirit Users formed bonds with already existing spirits.

“I believe so, yes. However, I do not know the exact details myself.” Sophie had only just been promoted to the two-star class Spirit Archwizardess, so she knew very little about being a three-star Spirit User.

“Allen, what are you plotting this time?” Cecil finally realized why he had suddenly wanted to see the spirits. He was looking at them with the same face he made when analyzing his own Summons. He definitely was not here for touching reasons like wanting to see the pretty scenery up close or to meet the spirits.

“Well, they’re here, and we’re here. I don’t think we’ll ever get such a good opportunity to check out so many different spirits.”

Allen explained that, as the Rank S dungeon that they would be challenging surely gave a lot more XP than the dungeons in Academy City, he predicted Sophie would max out her level and get to change her class again within six months to a year from then. If she found herself a feisty spirit now—and when better than now, when there were so many gathered here—perhaps there was a chance she could contract it as soon as she became a three-star.

Sophie adopted a thoughtful expression. “Is that how it works? I’m afraid I don’t quite know...”

“Hmm...” Allen suddenly started. “Oh, how about asking Sir Gatoluuga? He’s here at the banquet too, right?”

“Okay, I’ll go fetch him.” Keel immediately turned around and headed back toward the banquet venue.

“All right, all that’s left is the question of how to catch these spirits. Horo, give me a good look.”

“*Hoo!*”

“What?! Allen, you can’t go *catching* them! These are spirits!”

While Cecil scolded him, Allen dispatched a Bird D to observe the spirits gently floating high above using its Night Vision.

Krena asked out of curiosity, “How is it? Do you see any good ones?”

“It seems like a lot of them are gathered around what look like fruit up on the branches,” Allen noted.

“Those are World Tree fruit,” Sophie replied.

“Oh, the ones the elves use to make real elven elixirs? Ellie, can you bring us a few ripe ones?”

“Your will is my command.”

As it turned out, the spirits were partial to World Tree fruit. Allen recalled a game he had played in his previous life that involved using meat to bait and befriend various monsters. It was not that large a leap to conclude that World Tree fruits were the key to befriend spirits in this world. And because there were plenty of ripe ones hanging from the branches, Allen figured it would not hurt to grab a few.

Snap. Snap.

“It smells so sweet,” Dogora noted as he sniffed the one he was holding a few times.

Once everyone had one, Allen noticed the awkward look on Sophie’s face. “What’s the matter? We should be able to use these to catch one, right?”

“Um...I wasn’t sure whether to tell you, Lord Allen, but it’s actually forbidden to pluck World Tree fruits.”

“What?”

Seeing Allen’s bewildered face, Sophie explained that in Rohzenheim, snapping branches of the World Tree and taking its fruit were both considered serious crimes.

“Really?!” Cecil sounded panicked. Even though Allen was the one who had done everything, she immediately made an excuse. “I mean, we only took some to give to the spirits, so it should be fine, right?!” She realized that during her time in Rohzenheim with Allen, they had done quite a lot that would normally have gotten them in trouble with the elves—not least of which was destroying their capital city.

“That’s right, Sophie,” Allen nodded. “We’re only doing this to look for lively spirits. Dogora, don’t eat yours just because it smells nice.”

“Huh?! Like hell I would! No one’d be stupid enough to do that now!”

Crunch.

“Huh?” Allen turned around, reacting to what sounded like someone biting into a fruit. He found himself staring into the eyes of Krena, who had indeed given in to the sweet, forbidden temptation in her hands.

“NOOOOO! THE FRUIT!” The blood drained from Sophie’s face.

It was said that not a single elf had tasted a World Tree fruit in the past millennium. The Gamers’ eyes all trained on the girl whose cheeks were now bulging with said fruit.

“Wh-What?” Shifting uncomfortably under their stares, Krena added defensively, “It’s really yummy! You guys should try it too!”

Just as Allen was about to chide her, footsteps approached.

“Guys, I brought Sir Gatoluuga!”

It was Keel, approaching with a torch in hand and Gatoluuga following behind.

“Guys!” Allen hissed.

“Understood!” Sophie replied without missing a beat.

“Wh— *Abababa!*”

The Gamers moved as one, displaying teamwork better than even during their battle with Rehzal, to shove the remaining half of the World Tree fruit into Krena’s mouth. Thankfully, they managed to obfuscate the evidence just in time.



“Princess Sophialohne? What is the commotion?” Gatoluuga asked as he walked up to them, not noticing Krena swallowing hard with tears in her eyes nor her muttering about how she had wanted to take her time appreciating the taste more.

“Oh, it was nothing,” Sophie assured him. “Th-Thank you for coming all the way out here.”

Despite feeling something was amiss due to Sophie’s dry laugh, Gatoluuga decided not to pursue it. “Hmm, if you say so. Now, what can I do for you? I heard it’s related to the spirits in some way?”

“Well, when I become a Spirit User...” Sophie proceeded to tell him what Allen had said.

After listening to the end, Gatoluuga rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “I see now. It is true that when you become capable of directly borrowing the help of particular spirits, establishing emotional bonds with them is crucial. I myself waited a very long time here underneath the World Tree until one took a liking to me.”

He went on to suggest that Sophie try using a World Tree fruit as bait, confirming that what the Gamers had been about to do—and Allen’s theory of an interested spirit being able to immediately contract with Sophie after her next class change—was actually correct.

“What should I look for when choosing a spirit?”

“That’s a good question. Spirit Users are only able to contract with young spirits, so... Ah, there’s a salamander right there.” Gatoluuga pointed at a shining red spirit floating by that looked like a Japanese giant salamander. He explained that he had contracted a similar one as his fire elemental spirit.

“So this is the one we want? ’Kay, eat up, little guy. Here ya go.” Dogora thrust the World Tree fruit in his hands at it.

“*Au au.*” The young fire salamander sniffed it a few times, then opened its mouth wide to take a large bite.

At that moment, Dogora grabbed it with both his arms using the exact same

motion as catching horned rabbits back at Krena Village. “I got it!”

“What are you doing?!” Gatoluuga cried. “No, let it go right now!”

“Huh? Why? Don’t worry, I’ve got a good grip on it,” Dogora said reassuringly as he hugged the violently struggling fire spirit to his chest, not quite understanding the reason for the alarm in Gatoluuga’s voice.

The next moment, the red glow surrounding the fire salamander started growing in intensity. “*Au au!*” it cried loudly in protest as it quickly turned into a giant fireball.

“What are— Ow, that’s hot! Oh, ow, ow, I’m on fire!”

“Hey hey, this one’s feisty,” Allen noted with satisfaction.

“Someone! Put the fire out, please!” Dogora howled as he desperately rolled about on the ground.

After Gatoluuga summoned his contracted water spirit to extinguish the fire on Dogora, the group continued enjoying their banquet with the spirits beneath the World Tree.

Afterword

Thank you for purchasing this book! Thanks to your support, this fourth volume of Hell Mode is now out on shelves. I cannot fully express how grateful I am. Thank you very much.

Even though I keep talking about how thick each book is in my afterwords, this fourth volume ended up being just as thick. On top of the already very hefty main volume, I also got permission to include two rather wordy side stories as well. Thank you to my editor for being so understanding!

This time, I used the side stories to include details that I couldn't manage to include in the main story.

The first one is what happened to Rehzal in the past. I really wanted to introduce what he had been like before he became a Demonic Deity. My hope is that this episode sheds some light on what the battle in Rohzenheim had meant to him.

The second one is a story about the spirits. The elves and the spirits are the focus of this fourth volume, but the Sovereign of Spirits was pretty much the only spirit that ended up getting featured, and I wanted to fix that a little. I hope you find this side story a good ending to the volume.

Now, since this is an afterword, I suppose I'll talk a bit more about myself again. In the afterword of the first volume, I went over how I started uploading to *Shosetsuka ni Naro*. This time, I want to share a part of my life that I think really laid the foundation for me to eventually write light novels. These are, at the end of the day, only my personal thoughts, so please take it as just a story.

My dad was one of those typical company workers who would get dispatched to a different location every once in a while. Consequently, our family moved to a different place in Kyushu once every few years while I was in kindergarten and elementary school.

I personally had no complaints about this, but an incident did occur when I

was in the younger grades of elementary school. After this incident, my family did not move anymore during my time as a student.

Due to how frequently my dad's company shuffled its employees around its various offices, it included company housing as part of its welfare program. Some places, the company housing was practically brand new; some places, not so much.

When we were made to live in one of the latter, my mom finally reached the end of her rope and, like a volcano erupting, shouted, "I don't want to live in sh***y company housing like this anymore! Dad, buy a house! Now!"

"O-Okay, mom. Let's visit a home-building exhibition this weekend. Please don't be mad, mom!"

I just censored the exact word my mother used in order to protect the company my dad worked at, but yep, this very conversation did take place one day at our dinner table. This was the "Hamuo family being fed up with company housing and buying a house" incident.

After that, we went to an exhibition and selected a plot of land in an area newly zoned for single-family residences. Two years later, we moved in.

I have nothing but gratitude toward my parents for building our family home, protecting our family, and raising so many of us siblings. However, after we moved out of company housing and into our own house, I found myself with a problem. Namely, our home was really far away from my school.

We lived halfway up a hill, and the elementary school was all the way at the foot. Of course, I say it was far, but it was really only about one and a half kilometers. It's nothing compared to kids who have to ride a train or a ferry to get to school, but it was enough to affect what I did. Or rather, the way I used my head.

I started using my commute time to fantasize about the manga and anime I consumed on the daily. I would reflect on scenes that left an impression on me and mulled over parts that I particularly liked. I had a ton of fun moving the characters around in my mind and imagining how I would continue the story if I were the author.

This habit of mine continued for quite a while, as my middle and high school were also quite far from my house. I believe this is the part of my life through which I developed the ability to write stories.

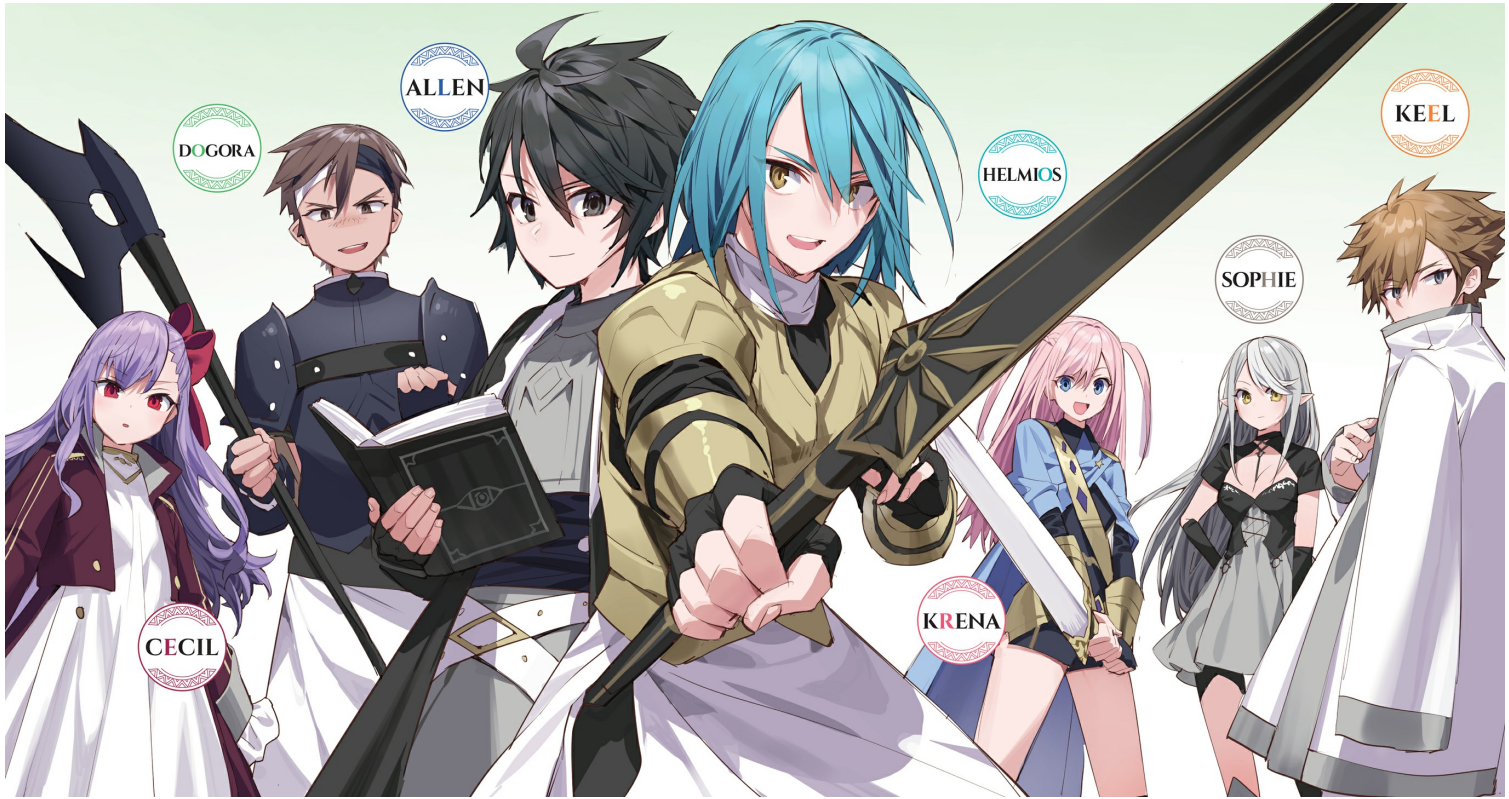
If there is anyone wishing that their children will grow up to become light novel writers, I highly recommend that you live in old company housing.

Well then, that's about it for this afterword.

The manga version of *Hell Mode* is currently serializing. Its pages depict the exciting scenes of the story in gripping detail. And to my delight, I was told that they would even up the pace at which it's being released! The mangaka, Tetta Enji-sensei, is doing amazing work, and I cannot thank him enough. Dear readers, I hope you enjoy seeing the world of *Hell Mode* in manga form too.

Let us meet again for volume 5. I'd be very grateful if you would continue giving me your support. Well, until then!







Bonus Short Stories

Meruru's Fight

As ordered, Meruru had separated from Allen's group at Ratash to head home. Soon, she was back in the Baukisian capital. She and the other dwarves who had returned from being on foreign exchange at the Academy Cities abroad then boarded magic ships, which from there, took them on a several-day trek to the frontline battleship where they were being stationed.

A girl who had been Meruru's classmate during their first year pressed up against the window of their magic ship. "I see the battleships! Y'think that's where we'll be fighting, Meruru?"

"I heard we're being sent to the commanding ship. That's allllll the way in the back. The ones actually doing the fighting are probably farther ahead."

"I see..."

Several vessels had come into view and were drawing closer by the minute. Baukis did not have only golems fighting the Demon Lord Army. It was certainly true that golem pilots like Meruru made a huge difference on the battlefield, but there was still plenty of opportunity for those with other Talents to shine. For example, both the magic ships in the sky and the battleships on the water required piloting and maintenance.

Meruru disembarked her magic ship, placing her boots on the top deck of a massive battleship while shouldering a large sack. This single vessel was large enough to carry and house thousands of dwarves, one of whom was now running her way.

"Meruru!"

"Dad!"

It was Meruru's father, Neneku.

Although he had already been informed ahead of time that even students

who had yet to graduate would be dispatched for this battle as well, Neneku's face clouded over at the sight of his daughter here in person. He knew what kind of fighting would be taking place, and he was far from thrilled that his daughter would be taking part. There were other parent-child pairs in similar circumstances all around them, and the tone of their conversations were likewise tinged with worry.

"Students disembarking from the magic ship are to follow your unit's instructions. I repeat, students disembarking from the magic ship are to follow your unit's instructions."

It had been a long time since Meruru had had the opportunity to speak with her father, but their moment was mercilessly cut short by a message blaring over the speakers.

"Dad, I gotta go."

"R-Right. Okay."

Meruru flashed her father a brave face and headed off, following her officer's orders.

"I heard a *lot* of monsters are attacking this year," Meruru's classmate said fretfully as they walked. "Are we gonna die?"

"We'll be fine," Meruru assured her.

The other girl gave her a dubious look. "How do you know?"

"Silence in the ranks!" an officer barked. "We will now appraise your Talents and abilities. Golem users, line up here."

There were ten Academy Cities in Baukis, as the nation itself boasted an overall population of two hundred million. The second-and third-years from all those Academies had been gathered together on this ship and were now being assigned stations according to their abilities.

Meruru joined the golem users, still carrying her big sack. She watched as those in line before her were handed notes after their appraisal and given orders for where to go next.

When it was her turn, the officer recited in a monotone tone, "State your

name, Talent, year, and whether you went on exchange.”

Meruru replied in the same matter-of-fact tone the others had used. “Meruru. Talos General. Second year. Went on exchange to the Kingdom of Ratash.”

“Oh, a Talos General!” A light sparkled in the officer’s eyes but died away almost immediately. “But second year, and you went on exchange. I see.”

It was said that a Talos General was born only once in a thousand years. However, because she was a second-year, and because she had gone on exchange to a country that did not have a golem on loan from Baukis, her class skills were most likely still only Lvl. 1 and her level probably was not all that high either.

He’s making that face like he’s assigning us based just on these questions, Meruru thought as she put her hand on the indicated crystal. It gave off a light much brighter than it had for the other dwarves. Her stats’ numerical then appeared on a jet-black board nearby. As the most technologically advanced country in the world, Baukis had the technology to determine not just a ranking of someone’s potential but also the precise value of each of their stats the way Allen’s grimoire could.

“Am I doing it correctly, sir?”

“You...” the officer said in disbelief. “These numbers indicate that you must have reached your level cap. Are you really a second-year student?”

“Yes, I am. Here, I think this might be relevant, sir.” Meruru dug out her adventure card and handed it over.

“What is th— HUH?! RANK A?!”

This card proved that Meruru had cleared at least three dungeons despite still only being a second-year student. Even among those finishing their third year, only one or two ever progressed so far, much less someone in their second year.

Meruru proudly added, “I’ve cleared *five* dungeons in Ratash, *and* my party leader holds an invitation to the Rank S dungeon.”

“W-Wait just a moment.”

The officer went to confer with his superior. Meruru caught snippets of their heated dispute, especially when the superior exclaimed, “That’s impossible!” and the officer insisted, “But it’s true!”

Soon, he returned. “Come with me.”

“Yes, sir.”

Meruru found herself brought to a meeting room. When she walked in, everyone inside looked over at her. The ones who appeared to be students were likely the valedictorians of the various Academies, all third-years with only a few months remaining until graduation. They quickly lost interest and returned to what they were doing. She sat in the center seat up front and lowered her sack onto the table.

A short while later, footsteps could be heard approaching the room.

“—Arggh! Put th’ top students in me crew? What d’they expect me t’do with scallywags who haven’t spent a day in battle? Who’s th’ son o’ a biscuit-eater who came up with this here *brilliant* idea? One o’ the ministers? Don’t tell me it been th’ emperor himself!”

“Admiral, please refrain from insulting His Imperial Majesty. And we’ll select the students to send you, so you needn’t trouble yourself!”

“Huh? We be talkin’ new members o’ me crew, right? Sorry, but I’ll be doin’ th’ pickin’ meself.”

“What do you mean by—”

The voices outside drew closer until the door suddenly banged open. A man in armor and a military uniform strode in, followed by a high-ranking officer. The former stood front and center and said in a languid voice, “I be Admiral Garara, commander o’ this here navy.”

One of the students exclaimed, “Admiral Garara?! In the flesh?!” He recognized the rough-looking man: this was the chief commander of Baukis’s navy and the country’s most powerful fighter.

“What? Ye got a problem?”

“O-Of course not! Sir!”

“Then shut yer trap. If ye got somethin’ to say, raise yer hand. We clear?”

“Sir, yes, sir!”

Despite having just been berated, the student in question looked delighted. It was an incredible honor just getting to exchange a few words with the champion of Baukis, said to have been single-handedly responsible for keeping the Demon Lord Army from ever having set foot on their soil.

“Apparently, all o’ ye be goin’ t’ fight the Demon Lord Army with me on the fore lines. Ye’ve been selected, that be why yer here. Hold on, these numbers on a second-year? An’ *three* Rank A dungeons?”

Admiral Garara had been flipping through the students’ profiles when he stopped at Meruru’s.

“*Five* Rank A dungeons, sir,” she corrected.

“Who gave ye permission to speak?!”

Meruru returned a sullen look for having been upbraided just for pointing out a mistake. However, there was something she simply had to say here and now with the admiral in the room. So she silently raised her hand.

The officer standing near the door admonished her. “Meruru, not now. You can ask your question later.”

Admiral Garara, however, glared at Meruru’s stubborn expression for a few moments, then said, “All right, go on. Let’s hear it.”

“I have two things to say, sir! First—I am carrying elven elixirs that the queen of Rohzenheim wants me to pass on to Baukis!” Meruru gestured at the large sack before her that held a thousand Crops of Magic.

“Elven elixirs, you say? What d’ they do?”

“It restores 1,000 MP for those who have surpassed Trials of the Gods. Um, considering the size of this room...one elixir is effective over an area the size of this room twenty times over!”

The meeting room was a roughly square space measuring twenty meters each

side.

“Twen—?!” The officer at the door made a squawk like a dying bird. “That’s nonsense! Meruru, that’s enough from you!”

Admiral Garara glared at him. “You, shut it.”

“I-I’m sorry, sir.”

“Be ye tellin’ the truth, lass?” Garara asked, turning back to Meruru. Without waiting for her answer, he began rubbing his chin thoughtfully and mumbling to himself. “It do be true that the princess o’ Rohzenheim went t’ Ratash on exchange... I s’pose we could confirm th’ effects an’ range ourselves.”

As someone who had yet to experience being on the front lines herself, Meruru had no way of knowing what would be the most effective way of using the Crops of Magic. That was why Allen had asked her to hand them over to someone in a position of authority.

As Meruru continued staring at Garara in silence, he suddenly recalled what she had said. “Oh, right. Ye said ye have two things. What be th’ other?”

“Please let me fight the Demon Lord Army at the very front.”

“Huh? Why?”

“My friends are fighting in Rohzenheim right now. And my father’s stationed on this ship!”

Meruru could not stand doing nothing while her friends were desperately fighting to bring Rohzenheim back from the brink of destruction. Additionally, her father was working on this ship, and she knew that those on the support ships at the rear would get overrun if the front line was breached. Because of these, Meruru wanted to do absolutely everything she could.

“Interestin’. I be likin’ th’ look in yer eye.”

“Thank you, sir!” Meruru gave her reply in a loud, energetic voice that reverberated through the room. The story of her exploits had only just begun.

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Hell Mode *The Hardcore Gamer Dominates in Another World with Garbage Balancing* Volume 4

by Hamuo

Translated by Taishi Edited by Seanna Hundt

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