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I Got a Cheat Skill in Another World and Became Unrivaled in the Real World, Too 5

Miku

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ISEKAI DE CHEAT SKILL WO TE NI SHITA ORE WA, GENJITSU SEKAI WOMO MUSO SURU, Volume 5 *LEVEL UP WA JINSEI WO KAETA*

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Prologue

The Forest of Blessings.

A forest where one could enjoy all the blessings of nature and collect many valuable wildflowers.

But the blessings it offered were not limited to plants and trees. Its influence extended even to Demons and monsters. The monsters that lived there had, through consuming a diet of those precious wild plants, gained great powers. While not as treacherous as, say, the Weald, it was still designated as a dangerous area.

And there was a reason why—despite it being packed to the brim with powerful monsters—it was designated as merely *dangerous*.

* * *

"Phew. I worked up a good sweat today, too."

A man sat atop a stump in the Forest of Blessings and mopped his brow.

He appeared to be middle-aged and wore the straw hat and overalls of a peasant farmer. The man wiped his sweat with a towel he had slung over his shoulders.

And yet there were some obvious differences between him and the average middle-aged man.

Take, for example, the way the trees all around him had been cut down, along with the various monster corpses scattered around the vicinity.

Not to mention the gigantic ax, about as long as the man was tall, propped against a tree.

"And yet...the trees here keep growing, no matter how many times I fell them. Even the monsters keep coming back despite my hunting efforts. Still, I suppose this is proof of the true strength of nature. The blessings here are... perhaps *too* strong."

He sighed as he spoke. This middle-aged man was in fact the very reason why the Forest of Blessings remained merely a *dangerous* area. He was a protector of humanity who bore the title of Deity of Axes.

"Still, it matters not. If I cut down a few more and thin out the monsters a little, that will prevent any of the beasts appearing in the surrounding villages."

He picked up the ax that was leaning against the tree and was just about to rise from the stump when...

"Huh?!"

...suddenly, the man felt a strong bloodlust from nearby.

At once on alert, the Deity of Axes dropped into a battle stance and readied his ax.

"Strange. Such an aura of murderous intent..."

And yet the Deity of Axes had never before encountered any being in the Forest of Blessings with an aura of malice so potent and oppressive.

"So this is where you've been, eh, Deity of Axes?"

"...? You..."

A man emerged from the depths of the Forest of Blessings.

The man had red locs and wore a black shirt opened wide at the chest with a white jacket on top. His flexing muscles, which had clearly been trained and honed to the very limit, were visible through the material.

He had a beastlike demeanor about him as his sharp golden eyes bore into the Deity of Axes.

And yes, this man was the one who had been shooting that aura of malice at the Deity of Axes moments before.

"What are you doing here...Deity of Fists?"

The Deity of Fists laughed at the Deity of Axes' reaction.

"There's no need to be so guarded."

"Excuse me? You're the one projecting deadly intent toward me."

"Calm down. I merely came here to...kill you."

"Huh?!"

As the Deity of Fists' words registered with the Deity of Axes, the hand holding the ax rose.

"Fissure Cry!"

Then he slammed the ax into the ground. A large crack appeared, spreading until it reached the feet of the Deity of Fists.

However...

"Wow, really? That's all you got?"

The Deity of Fists, looking bored, easily dodged the Deity of Axes' attack.

"See, even I can do that."

The Deity of Fists pounded the ground with his fist, and a sharp crack appeared, spreading much faster than the previous one, reaching the Deity of Axes' feet in seconds.

The Deity of Axes managed to dodge the attack, then roared at the Deity of Fists.

"Blast it! What do you mean you're here to kill me?!"

"There's no need to quibble over semantics. I'm simply going to kill you. That's really all there is to it."

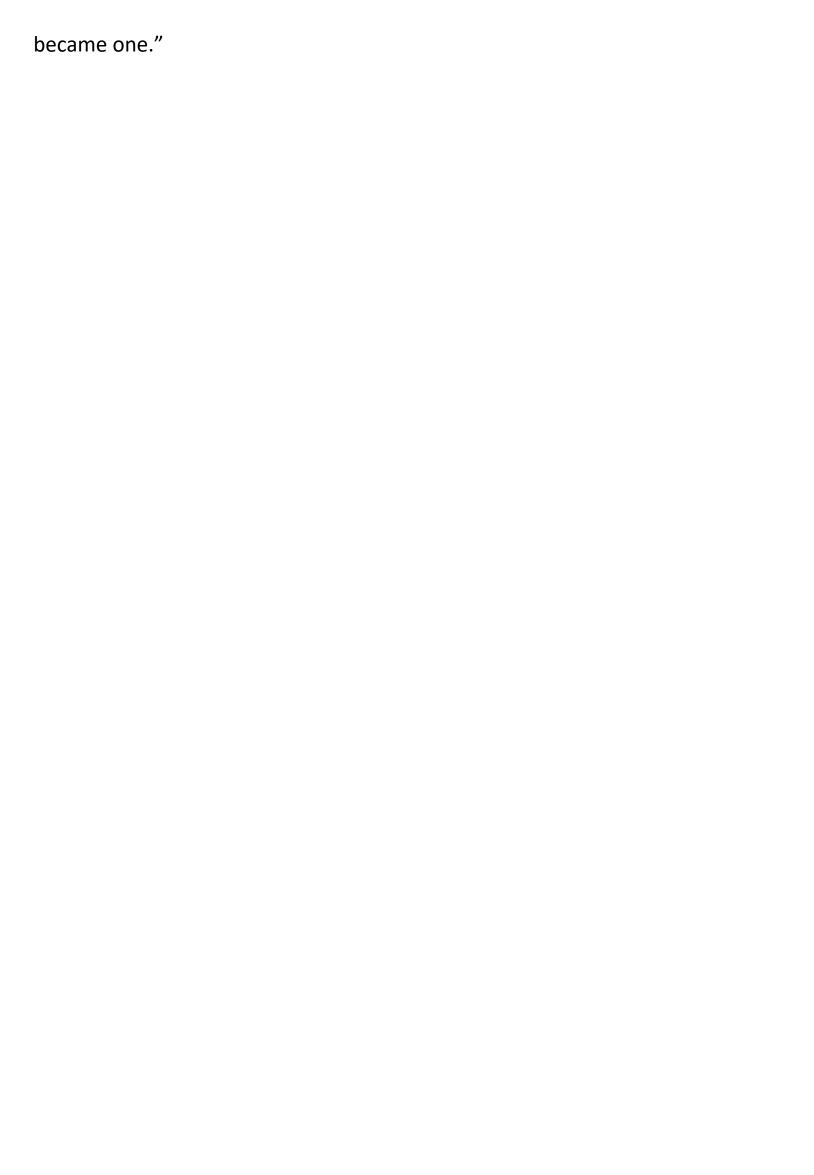
"Oh, that's all?! A man with the title of Deity should never..."

"Ah yes, Deity. Well, what of it?"

"What?!"

The Deity of Axes was rendered speechless by what the Deity of Fists was saying.

"I'm not interested in what the title of Deity means. All I want to do is fight challenging opponents. And since Deities seem like they get to do that a lot, I





"But why do you seek to fight me, a fellow Deity...?"

"Huh? So what if one who is equivalent to my power happens to be a Deity? I need a better reason than that to pass on a good fight."

"...I will not indulge your frivolous whims. Besides, recently, I have seen signs of Demons at work. With that in mind, I have no time to play fight with my peers."

"Demons, you say... Perhaps you're referring to this power?"

All at once, a black haze began to billow from the Deity of Fists' body.

"...What?"

That was indeed the very Demon power that the Deity of Axes had just been referring to. But the Deity of Axes was unable to comprehend how that power could be emanating from the Deity of Fists.

"Why...why do you wield that kind of power...?"

"What do you mean? To get stronger, of course. Isn't it obvious?"

"...! You're a traitor!"

"...Yeah, I guess I am?"

The Deity of Fists spoke without remorse, which stunned the Deity of Axes into silence.

"I mean, it's all irrelevant. I came here to kill you. That's really all there is to it."

"...Now that I know you're a traitor, I have a reason to kill you, too. I can't simply let you walk away like this..."

"Good! That's the spirit. Bring it on, then."

"Fissure Void!"

The Deity of Axes swung his huge ax rapidly, and a colossal blade of wind went spinning toward the Deity of Fists.

But the Deity of Fists easily dodged it.

"First an earth attack, now an air attack, eh? And yet they call you the Deity of

Axes... Or is that some sort of ironic joke?"

"No... You're finished."

"Huh?" The Deity of Axes' attacks did not just tear the ground and air. Actually, the blade of wind that the Deity of Fists had dodged continued to grow in size, then it came back around, aiming to cut right through him from the rear. "Ha! So you're not all talk! It doesn't matter! I can dodge just as well the second time!"

"You really think I'll allow that?"

"What?!"

In the space of a moment, the Deity of Axes swung the ax he wielded through the air, then let it fly toward the Deity of Fists.

Its force was tremendous, scattering new wind blades and preventing the Deity of Fists' retreat.

"Hey, now! Left, right, front, and back aren't the only possible escape routes, you know?"

The Deity of Fists attempted to evade the attacks by jumping into the air.

However...

"There's no escape for you now."

"Huh ...? What?!"

The Deity of Fists had been lured into a position where he straddled the first crack caused by the Deity of Axes' attack. The next moment, ultra-bright beams of light began to emanate from the crack in the ground.

"Fissure Cry is not just a technique that tears the ground apart. It is a technique that causes the very earth to scream."

The torrent of light was so intense that it burned down the surrounding trees, and the air blades and ax that the Deity of Fists had already dodged were still chasing after him, leaving him with no escape. The Deity of Fists was backed into a corner.

"Damn youuu!!!"

"Despite wanting to fight against a strong opponent, you let your guard down... Sky Prison!"

At the same time the Deity of Axes muttered the name of the technique, the blades of air, the giant ax, and the torrent of light engulfed the Deity of Fists' body all at once.

Staring at the bright light, the Deity of Axes frowned.

"But...I never expected a Demon power wielder could emerge from among the Deities... And what about the others...?"

"What, you think this is over?"

"Huh?!"

The Deity of Axes opened his eyes and turned in the direction of the voice, and he saw the Deity of Fists standing there unharmed.

"What...? But I captured you with Sky Prison...!"

"I broke out. You really don't deserve the title of Deity."

"What the ...? Guh!"

The moment the Deity of Axes tried to form words, a large amount of blood gushed from his mouth.

"What the ...?"

There was a large hole in his chest.

"Your attacks were too weak... Now you're dead."

"Even if you do kill me...the strongest Deity among us...the Deity of Swords...is sure to destroy you... You'd better be on your guard..."

"Just die, you insignificant speck."

"..."

The Deity of Axes collapsed on the spot and convulsed violently.

The Deity of Fists watched this with cold eyes and then kicked the Deity of Axes, who was by then reduced to a silent corpse.

"Ah, so boring. I went to the trouble of acquiring the power of the Demons and picked a fight with a Deity. You could at least have made it fun."

"...I thought I told you not to do anything on your own."

"Huh?"

Black mist suddenly gathered right next to the Deity of Fists, forming a humanoid silhouette, and a voice emanated from it.

"Whatever I do is up to me, isn't it?"

"Do you think that excuse is going to work? You are only borrowing the power of us Demons. And even if it was by chance, our power was a perfect match. That is why you must be very careful..."

"Oh, shut up."

The Deity of Fists interrupted the black mist, casually swinging at it with his fist.

The blow was so powerful that it not only blew away the surrounding trees and ground, but also completely wiped out the black mist.

"I don't take orders from anyone. Besides, if you think the power of the Demons will always belong to you and the others alone...you underestimate me."

The Deity of Fists turned his back on the place where the black mist had been.

"I'm going to do whatever I want."

Then, silently, he left the Forest of Blessings.

* * *

"So it's come to this, has it?"

In the World's Landfill, where the Demons lived, the black mist form that had warned the Deity of Fists earlier grumbled bitterly.

Its form was even darker than when it had appeared near the Deity of Fists, a

swirl of Demonic energy whose exact form could not be accurately identified.

"I think we misjudged his ability."

The Deity of Fists had completely broken free of the Demons.

"Because he was one of the few experimental subjects who was able to adapt to our power, we underestimated him. Now we have no choice but to eradicate him..."

The Demons had no use for a rogue agent, and so they swiftly decided upon annihilation.

"It's a bit of a hassle, but it actually works out in terms of our future plans. There's no need to worry about him. We still have that fragment of evil that was within the Deity of Arrows. All we need is a new host for it...," the Demon muttered to itself, quietly departing the scene.

CHAPTER 1 Life with Yuti

"Wh-what should we do now...?"
"Woof?"
"Oink."

We'd managed to survive an attack by a girl named Yuti, who possessed the power of the Demons, as well as Deity-level skills comparable to Master Rabbit. When Master Rabbit joined the fray to help, he convinced Yuti she'd been deceived by the Demons.

As a result, Yuti stopped attacking us, but Master Rabbit then told me to take care of her.

However, our former assailant is now holed up alone in her room trying to sort through her thoughts and won't respond, no matter what I try. No doubt right now, she's got a lot to think about, though...

"Well, there's nothing else to be done right now. I guess I'll do my daily workout, then make some food."

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

Night and Akatsuki respond adorably, almost as if they're agreeing.

"Huff! Ngh!"

Before I started coming to the other world, I did stuff like normal leg lifts, situps, back training, and squats, but for some reason I never managed to lose weight. Even though I kept up my routine diligently, never missing a day...

However, by leveling up in the other world, I've not only lost weight, but also

suddenly started gaining muscle. Really, the other world is just so mysterious, isn't it?

After finishing up the same workout routine I've been doing since before I ever went to the other world, I begin training with Night, and that's when I suddenly sense someone other than Akatsuki watching us. Looking over in that direction, I find Yuti standing there.

```
I stop sparring with Night and call out to her.
```

```
"What's up?"
```

"..."

But Yuti doesn't respond, which makes me blush and wonder what to do next.

Gurgleburgle.

Suddenly, I hear an adorable sound.

The source of the sound is...Yuti's stomach.

"Erm... Are you, perhaps, hungry?"

"...Yeah."

Yuti nods slightly.

That makes sense. Yuti is recovering from an intense battle, and I've been moving nonstop since then as well. Also, it's definitely nearing mealtime.

"Okay. I'm going to prepare some food now, so please wait a little bit."

""

Yuti nods once more in response to this, then quietly returns to her room.

Watching her as she leaves, I call out to Night.

"Okay then, let's make some food."

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

That said, I'm pretty tired from fighting with Yuti. And the thought of cooking sounds like too much effort.

Still, I won't have any energy if I don't eat something, and I'm hungry, too, so I decide to make a simple pasta dish. All I have to do is boil it.

Pasta is Earth food, of course, and Japan has a range of delicious ready-made pasta sauces. To be able to whip up such tasty food so easily... I really appreciate the fruits of Earth's innovation...er, I mean Japan's innovation.

I can feed Night and Akatsuki pasta, too... Or rather, since they can eat human food, I usually just prepare the same thing for all of us. Hmm...now that I think about it, the monsters of the other world are actually a little different from the animals on Earth...

Even preoccupied with thoughts like that, I manage to successfully whip up a dish of pasta with meat sauce.

Perhaps lured by the smell, Yuti emerges before I can even call her.

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"Smells good."
```

"Eh? Ah, um... Food's ready. Would you like to have some?"

```
"...Yeah."
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"...Ah, come to think of it... How are you feeling?"

"Satisfactory."

"I—I see."

Even after getting pummeled by Master Rabbit's attacks... Amazing.

Though I'm a little taken aback by Yuti's response, we both sit down to enjoy the meal.

```
"Er, well... Let's dig in, shall we?"

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

"Huh? Dig...in?"
```

Yuti quirks her head curiously, looks at the pasta in front of her, and then tilts her head even further.

"Ah, perhaps your people don't say something or give thanks before a meal?

Come to think of it, have you even seen pasta before?"

"Negative. How is it eaten?"

"Er, like this..."

I grab one of the forks laid on the table, scoop up some pasta, and demonstrate how to eat it, but for some reason Yuti still looks quizzical.

Then, as if she's made up her mind about something, she lifts up a fork and holds it out...toward me.

"Don't understand. You. Feed me."

"Huh?!"

I'm so startled that I almost drop my fork. F-feed her? But...I just showed her how to do it, didn't I...?

"Master always hand-fed me. So, feed me, please?"

What does she mean she's always been hand-fed? She's not a baby. Or was Yuti's master that overprotective? Totally different from mine! I mean, if Master Rabbit smothered me like that...it'd be totally weird.

I'm just sitting there totally shocked, but Yuti shows no signs of starting to eat on her own, and instead, she simply looks at me with those big, innocent eyes, her small mouth open and waiting.

"Ahhh."

"Uh..." Any way you slice it, Yuti sure isn't showing any signs of eating on her own initiative, so I finally give in and feed her some pasta. "Here."

"Nom... Mmm!"

Then Yuti's eyes widen, and she looks at me with surprise.

"Surprised. Very delicious. Are you a chef?"

"N-no, nothing like that..."

"Indeed... A chef would not have such physical strength. Intriguing."

Despite looking askance at me the whole time, Yuti continues eating the pasta at a rapid pace, and before I know it, she's finished the plate.

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"That was delicious."
```

I can't really take the credit. That ought to go to the sauce manufacturers.

After Yuti finishes eating, I'm just about to dig into my own meal when Yuti looks at me with a serious expression on her face.

```
"Hmm? What's up?"
```

"Request. May we introduce ourselves?"

"Huh?"

Isn't it a bit late for that?! And yet she sounds so casual about it!

"You are the disciple of that Deity, I know. But I know nothing else."

"Oh yeah..."

After getting attacked out of the blue like that, we launched straight into fighting, obviously without any form of introduction... Hmm, though pausing mid-fight for a round of formalities sounds like something only the mentally deranged might go for.

"I'm Yuuya Tenjou. As you know, I'm a disciple of Master Rabbit..."

"Understood. I am Yuti. A disciple of the Deity of Arrows."

After listening to my self-intro, Yuti responds only briefly with her own.

With those formalities out of the way, I can't really avoid asking her about her situation any longer.

"So...have you sorted out your feelings...?"

"...Not sure."

"I see... Well, Master Rabbit asked me to take care of you, but..."

As I rack my brain over how to explain things, Yuti lowers her eyes.

"...Humans killed my master. However, I did not know the Demons were working in the shadows. I still have not pardoned the humans who killed my master. But if what the rabbit says is true...then those humans have already passed on. So I will defeat the Demons that appear to be the cause of it all. That

[&]quot;Oh, well, good."

is my plan."

"…"

Then Yuti looks me in the eyes again.

This isn't about me, so I can't exactly tell her that seeking revenge is wrong. And I don't have any right to stand in her way.

"Where do you plan to go from here?"

"No plan."

In that case...is there anything I can do to help her?

I try to come up with some possibilities, but I'm just a student, and nothing good is coming to mind. In the end, I sigh heavily.

Lifting my gaze, I notice Yuti's clothes are covered with mud.

Oh yeah. Immediately after the fight, she passed out. And when she woke up, she immediately shut herself up in her room. She probably wouldn't have even thought about changing clothes. Hmm, it might have been better if I'd prepared her a hot bath before making food...

While thinking about this, I suddenly realize Yuti is looking down at herself with intense scrutiny.

"Hmm? What's wrong?"

"I'm covered in mud. Request. I want to wash."

"Ah, yeah... You got pretty muddy during our fight. But instead of just washing off, why don't you have a soak in the tub?"

"The...tub? What is 'tub'?"

"Huh? You don't know how to take a bath...but you know how to wash yourself, don't you?"

"Affirmative. Master and I often washed our bodies together."

"See, if the water is warm, it's called a bath."

"I understand. Interesting. Then I shall have this tub, or bath, thing."

"Okay, I'll go ahead and run a bath for you. Just hang tight, okay?"

It would be nice if I could bring a portable tub outside so she could soak in nature, but that also seems kind of weird, so I just run her a bath in the regular Earth bathroom tub.

```
"All right, the bath's ready."

"Okay."

"...Hmm?"

For some reason, Yuti is raising both her arms, staring at me.

"What? Washing requires removal of clothes."

"Y-yeah. That's true."

"Yuuya. Undress me."

"Why me?!"
```

You have to undress to take a bath. I'm with her up to there. But I can't fathom why I have to be the one to undress her!

"Have I said something amiss? Master always undressed me."

"Your master did?!"

We've gone way beyond overprotective! Just how close were those two anyhow?!

I don't know how old Yuti is, but she looks to be about the age of a junior high school student. Even so, she needs to be hand-fed and undressed? Did her master never want her to learn independence?

At any rate, I'm not about to undress her. I manage to convince her to do it herself somehow, and then I show her to the bathroom.

In the bathroom, when I explain about the showerhead and the shampoo and so on, Yuti's eyes widen.

"This place is full of mysterious devices. Are they all magical devices?"

"No, they're not magic..."

"But when you twist this strange knob, water comes out. It's amazing."

I've never really thought about it, but I guess things like showers and taps and

so on might not exist in the other world. Hmm, I guess being able to twist a tap and get clean water anytime you like is pretty convenient.

"This soap, too, is amazing. It's much foamier than the kind Master used."

"Is—is that so? Anyway, you know how to use everything now, right?"

Yuti silently nods.

"All right then, I'll just..."

"I'm getting in right now."

"Whaaat?!"

Even though I'm standing right there, Yuti whips off her white dress on the spot.

Hey! I thought you needed help getting undressed? You seemed to manage that just fine! ... Wait, that's totally beside the point here!

I freeze up, shocked by Yuti's behavior, but she doesn't seem to notice and instead tosses her clothes on the floor before entering the bathroom.

I'm so flabbergasted, all I can do is stand there motionless...

"...I guess I'll do some laundry..."

If I was in my right mind, I'd check with her that it was okay for me, a guy, to be washing her clothes. But in my state of shock and factoring in how she has nothing else to wear, I decide instead to just get on with it and do the laundry without any further hesitation.

As the washing machine begins its cycle, I'm more exhausted in this moment than I ever was while locked in battle with Yuti.

* * *

"Okay, so while she's taking her bath, I need to prepare a place for Yuti to sleep..."

Also, right now it's okay, but if Yuti is going to be living with me, I'll have to find her some spare clothes.

We haven't really discussed stuff yet, but if I let Yuti go off like this, she's going to be totally consumed by revenge.

All alone, nowhere to sleep, nowhere to stay...

In that case, I figure, my house can at least be a place of refuge for Yuti.

"Well, I suppose if she's going to live in this house, then I should get her some outfits and teach her what she needs to know to get by on Earth..."

I mean, we haven't decided for sure yet if she's going to stay or not, but if she's going to be spending time at my house, then she should learn a thing or two about Earth so she won't get herself into any kind of trouble.

"Hmm, what should I do now, though?"

"Woof?"

"Oink?"

In response to my question, Night and Akatsuki both tilt their heads.

At that moment, the doorbell rings.

"Hmm? Who could that be? A door-to-door salesman?"

I don't recall ordering anything, so wondering what it could be, I head to the entry hall...

"Hello, Yuuya."

"K-Kaori?!" Surprisingly, my visitor is none other than Kaori. "What's up?"

"Well, I happened to be passing by your house, and I was just wondering what you were up to..."

"I—I see."

I can't help but be shocked by what Kaori's saying.

No doubt there isn't any deeper meaning to her dropping by like this, but my mind is working overtime anyway.

As I stand there thinking hard about the implications of this, Kaori starts to look apologetic.

"Sorry, is this a bad time?"

```
"Huh? No, not at all!" I answer frantically, and Kaori looks relieved.
  "Good... Oh, that reminds me...do you remember the request I made?"
  "You...made a request?"
  "Yes! I asked you to take me sightseeing in the other world. You said no at the
time because it's dangerous, but I'm still just so curious..."
  "Oh, uh..."
 Sure... Who wouldn't want to check out a magical other world when there's
one in the vicinity?
  But...
  "It really is dangerous, and—"
 "...Yuuya. I have bathed."
  "Huh?"
 Suddenly, I hear a voice from behind me, and I turn around without thinking
to see...
  "Y-Yuuya... There's a girl, and she's..."
  ...Yuti standing there, dripping water...and stark naked!
  "I... I can explain! You see... It's very, very complicated!"
  "Yuuya. I have bathed. What now?"
  "'What now'?! Get dressed, of course!"
  "I don't have any clothes."
  "Well, that was..."
```

I was just getting to that!

"...? Yuuya, who is this woman?"



Trapped between the both of them, I send a pleading gaze heavenward.

"Someone... Please help me out here...!"

* * *

"I—I see... So that's what happened..."

After that, I managed to pull myself together and did my best to explain Yuti's presence, and luckily, I was able to clear up any misunderstandings brewing in Kaori's mind. If I hadn't, no doubt she would have thought me some sort of pervert, and that added a sense of urgency to my desire to explain things. What a relief that I got through that awkwardness somehow...

As for Yuti, she used magic to dry her laundry-damp clothes and is once again dressed.

Next, I ask Kaori for some advice about Yuti's situation. Acquiring women's clothing would be a difficult task for a man.

"Well, there's just one thing I want to confirm first... Is Yuti going to be living with you indefinitely, Yuuya?"

"Hmm...it depends on what Yuti wants to do..."

"Y-you can't! You can't cohabitate with a girl!"

"Agh, you've got a point..."

What Kaori's saying makes sense.

But as I stand there flustered, Yuti pipes up, a solemn look on her face.

"I like this place."

""Huh?""

Kaori and I both grunt in surprise at the same time in response to what Yuti's just said.

"You...like this place?"

"Yuuya's food is good. The bath feels good. Conclusion. This place is good."

"That's your reasoning?!"

"I have no place to go anyway. If you turn me away, I'll have no choice but to sleep out in the open."

"Oh no, you can't do that!"

"Absolutely not!"

Even Kaori backs me up, rejecting Yuti's suggestion.

Yuti's a girl. It's too dangerous to go sleeping outdoors in the other world with monsters roaming about... Hmm, although maybe she doesn't need to worry about that, since she's tougher than I am and all...

"Don't worry. I lived in the forest with my master before."

"In—in the forest?"

"Affirmative. Accordingly, I am accustomed to camping outdoors."

"I mean... You might be used to it, but I'm not sure we'd feel comfortable..."

Sighing at what Yuti just said, I start over.

"Well, my master asked me to take care of you, so you can live here with me. There are plenty of rooms, after all."

Thanks to the Door to a Different World and its Money Conversion function, I don't have any problems when it comes to money. So adding one more person to my household won't be an issue, and this house is actually too big for just me, Night, and Akatsuki.

"Relieved. Truthfully, if rejected, I'd be in trouble. The power of the Demons has calmed down now, but it hasn't disappeared completely."

"Huh?"

"Right now, I can control it, so it's okay. But I feel like there's still a little bit of Demon left in me."

Hold on a sec! I can't just look past that!

While I'm panicking over what Yuti's just said, Kaori, who doesn't know anything about the Demons, tips her head to one side quizzically.

"Demon ...? What do you mean?"

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"Huh? Oh. Er... How to explain...?"
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To be honest, even I still don't fully understand it. According to Master Rabbit, it's like a cluster of all the negative aspects of the world...

While I struggle to come up with an answer, Yuti responds on my behalf.

"A Demon is like the ills of the world. It's difficult to explain in detail. However...it's bad."

"O-okay...? Erm, so are you saying that bad thing is inside you somehow, Yuti?"

"Affirmative. It was only temporarily suppressed by the power of that pig right there."

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"Oink! Oink?!"
```

"C-calm down, Akatsuki."

Akatsuki doesn't seem to appreciate being called a pig by Yuti, and he begins shuffling, stamping, and snorting on the spot. It comes off as adorable, though, which reduces the effect somewhat.

"I understand... So there's a risk that the Demon will take control again..."

"It is possible. Now that I have decided to oppose the Demons, I cannot guarantee I will be able to command my power like before."

That's true. If Demons could access the specific powers they'd doled out, they'd probably strip that power from any beings who might end up being their enemies.

"Fortunately, the pig is here. So I can remain in control."

"I see..."

In that case, I certainly can't send Yuti away.

Now that Yuti has decided to fight against the Demons, she will be reluctant to put other humans in harm's way.

"I think you'd better stay here after all, Yuti."

"Affirmative."

"...I suppose it can't be avoided... But, Yuuya, you've really started making all kinds of female acquaintances, haven't you? Without me knowing anything about it..."

"Huh?! Y-you've got it all wrong! This is just...completely coincidental!"

"Hmm, if you insist..."

Okay, it's true that Kaori's only met other girls like Lexia and Luna, but it's not like that at all! ...At least, probably not. But wait a sec. I have male acquaintances, too, right? Like Owen and Arnold... Hmm, now I'm getting kinda worried...

Kaori looks conflicted. Yeah, I'm going to be living with a girl, but I have no intention of getting up to any funny business. Anyway, with her level of strength, she'd kick me to kingdom come if I tried.

But more importantly...does this mean Kaori doesn't trust me? If so, that makes me sad...

I'm feeling a bit deflated, but I've made up my mind to accept Yuti as a houseguest, so I'd better turn my attention to more immediate matters.

"Still, I have no idea what she's going to do while I'm at school. I'm a little anxious about leaving her alone all day..."

"School?"

Yuti quirks her head to one side. Perhaps she's unfamiliar with the term.

Night and Akatsuki are well-behaved, so I can leave them home alone, but what about Yuti? She doesn't seem to know much... She needs help feeding herself and bathing. If something happened to her... The best way would probably be to have her stay at the house in the other world and tell her not to come to the Earth house, but...that seems a bit restrictive.

While I'm lost in thought, Kaori timidly asks Yuti an unexpected question.

"Um...well, would you like to go to school, too, Yuti?"

"Huh?"

I startle, taken aback by her out-of-left-field suggestion, but Kaori continues.

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"How old are you, Yuti?"
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"My age? I know not."

"Y-you don't know how old you are...? Well, you look like you might be junior high school age, so how about entering junior high?"

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"That's..."
```

It's daunting to think of bringing Yuti to school, but it might be good if Yuti has the opportunity to focus on something other than the Demons.

The only issue is...

"It'd be great if Yuti could go to junior high, but it's not as easy as that. In Yuti's case, she doesn't even have a family register, so how is she supposed to apply to any school...?"

"In that case, she can just enter Ousei Academy."

"...What?"

"There's another school building behind the main building we attend every day, remember?"

"Er, well..."

Actually, Ousei Academy is so huge that I still don't have a good grasp on all the facilities it has, so to be honest, this isn't ringing a bell.

"The junior high students have their classes in that building. Have you ever seen them? It's hard to tell because their uniforms are the same as us high school students, but..."

"Oh, right..."

Come to think of it, there seems to be more students than I'd expect from just the high school classes. That must be because there are junior high school students in the mix, too.

"If she attends Ousei Academy's junior high, then you'll be right next door if anything happens, Yuuya. That'd be reassuring, right?"

"Reassuring, yeah, but is it really that easy to enter?"

"For high school students, it's a little difficult to enroll if you're not already affiliated with another school, but it's a different story for junior high students."

Kaori smiles confidently at me, then turns to Yuti.

"Yuti, would you like to attend Ousei Academy?"

"I don't know if I'd like to or not yet... But at least if Yuuya is there, I won't need to worry."

Kaori nods with satisfaction, then with a clap moves on to the next order of business.

"In that case, let's go buy some new clothes for you right now! Then if we go directly to my father to explain the situation, the formalities can be taken care of right away."

Thanks to Kaori, things seem all set for Yuti.

"Hey... Thank you. Honestly, I didn't know what to do..."

"I'm just glad I was able to help."

"If there's anything I can do to thank you..."

"Hmm... Ah! Okay, then! I want to visit a town in the other world!"

"Huh?"

"You're saying no?"

"Ugh..."

After all the strategizing she's just been doing to help Yuti, I'd like to indulge her request, of course...

As I struggle to think of a response, Yuti gives me an odd look.

"Question. Why won't you take her to town?"

"Huh? Well, it's dangerous..."

"Dangerous...? Yuuya, your logic is weird. The only real dangers to you are the Demons or perhaps the Deities. And such opponents don't spring up often."

"I'm not that strong, though..."

Sure, I've gained experience fighting against monsters in the Weald, but I don't feel like I've gotten any stronger. Maybe I'm comparing myself against people like Yuti and Master Rabbit, though.

Either way... It's nice to know people think so much of me...

Sighing, I decide on one condition.

"All right. But first, we need to get Kaori geared up."

"Huh?"

Kaori looks taken aback by this.

"Yuti might say everything will be fine, but if something were to happen, it could really be a disaster. That's why, to be on the safe side, we need to get you some equipment first, Kaori. Once you've got the right gear, you should be protected even if something does happen..."

"I—I understand! That's fine with me! Um... So how do I get this equipment?"

"I'll get everything together by, say, next weekend at the latest. I was thinking we could use this weekend to go and do a little sightseeing in the royal capital of the other world...if that's okay? In that case, I'll give you your equipment on Saturday, and we can head straight out."

"I'm fine with either Saturday or Sunday! Also, Yuti's enrollment in school will probably go into effect after next weekend, so it's perfect."

Kaori nods, seemingly pleased with my plan, then she turns to Yuti again.

"Well, now that we've made plans for my tour of the other world, shall we get going?"

I leave Night and Akatsuki behind, and together with Kaori, I escort Yuti out of the house.

* * *

The moment Yuti steps outside and sees the view before her, she freezes.

"Surprise. These are...buildings?"

"Yeah, these are all houses."

```
"Houses of...nobility?"

"Huh? No, not nobles... Just regular people's houses."

"Regular?!"
```

Yuti's eyes go even wider. But are houses really anything worth remarking on? Hmm, thinking back on the houses I saw in the other world... All right, they weren't as big as the houses you see in Japan, and there were a lot of them that looked more like log houses. Some were made of stone or brick, though.

Yuti looks around, seeming shocked by the Earth houses and streets...

"...! A monster?!"

"Yuti?!"

Yuti balks at a passing car, leaping backward.

Yuti reaches for her bow, then remembers that I took it, and a flash of impatience crosses her face.

"Demand. Return my weapon. Otherwise, I won't be able to defeat it."

"You can't defeat a car!"

"I guess cars don't exist in the other world..."

Kaori smiles wryly at Yuti's reaction, and then the two of us do our best to explain cars to her.

"...I understand, to some extent. It's something similar to a horse-drawn carriage. But what makes it move? I don't sense any magic."

"It's not magic. It's gasoline."

"Gasoline...? As expected, some unknown force."

Trying to clarify seems useless... How am I supposed to explain gasoline?

Once we've managed to assure Yuti that a car is just like a carriage, we head out to buy clothes for her. But Yuti, still an Earth newbie, starts reacting in ways we'd never expect.

"Yuuya. What is this pillar?"

"That's a telephone pole."

"A telephone pole... I'll climb it."

"No, don't climb it!"

Why did she think of climbing it?

"Yuuya. What is the function of this house's wall? This won't prevent an enemy from attacking."

"I mean, there aren't any enemies, so... No, don't climb that, either!"

Apparently, Yuti used to live outdoors along with her master, the Deity of Arrows, so perhaps she's used to climbing whatever obstacle she comes across. Like a monkey.

When we met in the other world, Yuti was focused only on fighting, but now she seems interested in everything, and her attention quickly flits from one thing to another.

We continue our walk, but with Yuti dressed as she is, she stands out, and passersby whisper among themselves when they see us.

"Hey, check that out..."

"Wow...she looks like a doll..."

"Some kind of cosplay?"

"Hmm, look at her hair. It's really kind of wild. And her eye color seems weird..."

"Did you see the other girl? She's really cute, too, huh?"

"...And isn't the guy with them the same one who was in that photo with the model Miu? That caused quite a stir..."

"Darn! Look at him with those two cuties! I'm so freakin' jealous!"

As all kinds of curious glances shoot my way, Yuti stops looking around and turns to me.

"Yuuya. Humans are staring. It's unpleasant. Can I shoot them?"

"No, you definitely can't!!!"

Even in the other world, you wouldn't be able to shoot someone for such a

reason. Er, would you?

Yuti seems dissatisfied with my response, but she drops it, although she keeps looking around nervously.

Then, while still busily looking this way and that, Yuti suddenly dashes into the road.

I mean, in the other world, there's no real distinction between roads and sidewalks. There are just roads, so it probably seems natural to Yuti to just cross without thinking.

"Oh! Watch out!"

I hear someone cry out, and thinking quickly, I leap forward, grabbing Yuti and swinging her away from the road.

Whoa!

"What a move!"

"My eyes couldn't keep up..."

"So cool..."

As the onlookers gasp and exclaim over what I've just done, Kaori comes rushing over, looking flustered.

"Y-Yuuya, Yuti... Are you all right?"

"Yeah. Well, I'm fine, but..."

As I speak, I look down at Yuti in my arms, and she gazes back up at me with a confused look in her eyes.

"Concern unwarranted. I was fine without assistance. If a car had hit me, it is the car that would have been smashed."

"That's beside the point! If a car hit you, you don't know for sure that you wouldn't get hurt! Also, I don't want to see someone's car getting smashed!"

"... Unfathomable. I am not so lax in my training as to be hurt."

"Could you please do something about those hair-trigger reflexes of yours...?"

Even though I'm already tired out, I follow Kaori, and we eventually reach our

destination—the shopping district near our school. There are some new buildings under construction, indicating it's going to continue being developed.

"I think the clothes from this shop would suit Yuti!"

"D-do you really think so?"

I have no idea what's good and what's not when it comes to girls' fashion, so I have nothing to contribute here.

I'm thinking about how useless I am in a situation like this when I suddenly realize Yuti is staring off into space.

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"Hmm? What's wrong?"

"It's going to fall."

"Huh?"
```

Yuti points to one of the buildings under construction and continues in a calm tone.

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"It's going to fall. That pillar."

"Pillar...? Wait, you're kidding?"
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What Yuti is pointing at is a chunk of rebar being hoisted up by a crane.

I'm about to ask Yuti, "Wait, how do you know that?" when she continues.

"Both parent and child will die."

"Huh?"

"Yuti, what's wrong?"

Realizing we're no longer following, Kaori turns around in confusion, but right now I'm stunned silent by what Yuti's just said... Something so shocking that I can't just brush it aside.

I look again at the spot where the rebar is being hoisted...

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"Seriously...?"
```

There, I see a woman holding a baby, about to walk underneath the dangling chunk of rebar.

Then...

Clank!

...as a terrible metallic sound rends the air, the construction materials begin to fall, right above the mom and baby!

"Yeeek!!!"

"H-hey!"

"Watch out! Run!"

Others who see the rebar falling scatter as quickly as possible, but the woman standing in the exact spot where the rebar's about to land seems to be in a state of shock, unable to move.

"Darn it...!"

I dash over at top speed and grab the frozen woman.

Having done that, though, I realize I won't be able to dodge the falling rebar in time.

Seriously?! What do I do?!

Could I use magic? But all these people... No, now's not the time to worry about things like that!

Immediately, I prepare to cast magic, but before I can do that, my body seems to move on its own.

Maybe it's due to all the intensive training I did with Master Rabbit, coupled with my daily workouts, but for whatever reason, I find myself swinging my leg up and kicking the chunk of rebar.

Master Rabbit's kick, combined with my current stats, could easily blast away the rebar. But if I'm not careful, I could end up inflicting extraneous damage on the surrounding area.

So, like using my legs to trap a soccer ball, I parry the rebar, absorbing its impact, and gently set it down to land.

"Huh?"

Everyone was braced for the impact, but the expected noise never came. Now the onlookers are standing there looking stunned.

Ignoring the onlookers, I speak to the woman, who's still frozen.

"Are you all right, ma'am?"

"Huh...? Y-yes!"

The sound of my voice seems to snap the woman out of her state of shock, but as she looks more closely at me, she reddens and stiffens up again.

"H-hey. What just happened?"

"Err... Not sure..."

"For a moment, it looked like that guy just kicked that chunk of rebar out of the air..."

"No, no, no... Kicking rebar? He'd be pulverized. Look, he's all in one piece!"

"B-but it looked that way to me, too..."

It seems I acted much more conspicuously than I'd planned to, but...that can't be helped.

The woman keeps bowing and thanking me, but after I manage to extricate myself from her and rejoin Kaori and Yuti, Kaori looks at me with a conflicted sort of expression on her face.

"Um...I know you're kind of amazing, Yuuya, but it really worries me when you go charging headlong into danger like that..."

"Oh. Uh... Sorry."

"...? Why? No need to apologize. Yuuya was bound to be fine."

"That's not really what we're talking about here, though."

But Yuti just frowns back at Kaori, tilting her head as if confused.

We only came to shop for clothes for Yuti, but I'm already feeling completely exhausted. Finally, we make it to the store.

...And yet a challenge awaits me here, too!

"Ah, um... Kaori? Do I have to be present for this, too?"

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"Hmm? Of course!"
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Since it's a women's clothing store, it's only natural that there are many female customers.

But only one man...me!

"H-hey... See that guy over there?"

"Yeah... Isn't he the guy from that photoshoot with Miu?"

"Wow, I thought that photo must have been edited, but he really is that handsome in real life..."

"I guess he must be here shopping with his girlfriend...?"

"I'm so jealous!"

I'm sure it's just my imagination, but it feels like people are staring at me!

I feel extremely uncomfortable, but all I can do is wait for Yuti, who's browsing with Kaori and trying things on.

"Oh, miss? Please wait, miss!"

"Yuti! No!"

"Hmm?"

There's suddenly a big commotion at the back of the store, and when I look in that direction...

"Yuuya. What do you think?"

"Huh? WHOA!"

Yuti's standing there in a pair of white underwear, hands on her hips.

"Y-Yuti?! Put some clothes on!"

"...? Question. My underwear. Appraise. Clothes not needed right now."

"Could you please not ask me, a man, for my opinion on that?!"

"Why not?"

"Why not?!"

What kind of logic led her to this?

I desperately try to avert my eyes, but Yuti walks right up to me and uses the physical abilities she possesses as a disciple of the Deity of Arrows to force me to look.

"Objection. Why don't you look?"

"There's no need for me to look, is there?!"

"...? Yuuya will purchase. Thus, I need your appraisal."

"I beg you, don't involve me...!"

She doesn't have to be polite just because I'm the one paying!

As I struggle to avoid looking at Yuti, Kaori and the shop clerk come over, and thanks to them, I'm able to escape from the awkwardness.

After that, we manage to buy some new underwear and clothes for Yuti, but she still seems dissatisfied for some reason.

"Does not compute. Yuuya was paying. Thus, he should have appraised the goods."

"It's really not where the issue lies..."

"...It looks like we're going to have to educate her on many more things than I originally thought..."

After purchasing some other everyday items, we go straight to talk to Tsukasa, the principal of Ousei Academy and Kaori's father. And just as Kaori said, we're able to successfully enroll Yuti in the school.

CHAPTER 2

A Royal Capital Incident

Thanks to Kaori, Yuti is enrolled in the junior high school. So to keep up my end of the bargain, I've come to the Weald in the other world to get some equipment for her.

Truthfully, for Kaori's equipment, I'm not thinking in terms of armor like the Bloodstained Ogre armor I use. I can use that stuff because I've leveled up and increased my status, but it would be a bit too much for Kaori.

Hmm, for Kaori's equipment, I should probably go for an accessory with a powerful effect... But could I really acquire such a useful item so easily?

Still, I have until this weekend to get something good, and that's probably enough time. I'll aim for drop items that can be obtained from beasts in the Weald.

The monsters in the Weald are tough, which means equipment obtained here has powerful effects. There might be some items just perfect for Kaori that I haven't obtained yet.

Still, there are too many uncertainties. In the worst-case scenario, I should be able to get the perfect equipment for Kaori if I head to the royal capital. Hmm, that would probably be easier...

Buuut...

"I'm thinking of fighting all the monsters right here in the Weald so I can get some equipment for Kaori."

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

"All right."

Night, Akatsuki, and Yuti all nod in response... Huh?

"Err, you're coming, too, Yuti?"

"...? Am I not welcome?"

"No, it's not that... But that Demon power inside you hasn't disappeared... I feel like maybe you should avoid strenuous battles... I'm worried about something happening and you losing control... Also, you're still pretty beat-up from the previous fight... Perhaps you should stay back and rest..."

"No need for concern. It's not battling that makes me go wild. Besides, my wounds from before have already healed. Thanks to the pig."

"Oink? Oink!"

Akatsuki doesn't seem to know exactly what Yuti's saying, but he puffs up with pride anyway, since it's clearly a compliment.

Indeed, the skill Akatsuki used to calm down Yuti's Demon power, Holy Ground, was able to heal her wounds easily...

"Anyway, there's no need to worry. Besides, since it's quiet right now, I want to train, to learn how to hold back if something happens."

"I—I see?"

I have no idea how Demon power should be handled, so I just opt to trust Yuti here. Besides, if she does happen to get out of control...Akatsuki's powers should be able to contain her.

Mind made up, I set foot once again into the Weald with my companions to go and search for equipment for Kaori.

* * *

I figure there won't be any new beasts in the area where I usually go hunting, so I head to the deepest part of the Weald, where creatures like Mithril Boars can be found.

After walking for a while and scanning the surroundings for signs of monsters,

Yuti suddenly stops. At basically the same moment, Night seems to grow cautious as well.

"Hmm? What is it?"

"...A monster."

"Woof..."

I haven't picked up on anything yet, but it seems the two of them have sensed the presence of a monster. Man...Yuti's powers are truly unfathomable... Even without her Demon power, she has the same ability to detect enemy presences as Night has...

For now, we cloak ourselves and head in the direction of the presence they've sensed. Akatsuki makes sure not to forget the Cloak of Concealment.

Approaching with caution, I see a lone rabbit.

However, it's not like Master Rabbit. This rabbit has yellow fur, and it's dressed very unusually, in a tuxedo and top hat, with a red bow tie.

"Huh? That monster..." I mumble in surprise; it looks so odd. But then I realize Yuti is gazing at the monster, wide-eyed.

"That...is a Fantasy Rabbit."

"F-Fantasy Rabbit? Is it a tough opponent?"

"Negative. You might say it's the weakest beast in the Weald. In other places, too. However...encountering it is rare. So it is known as the Lucky Rabbit."

"The Lucky Rabbit, eh...?"

Continuing to listen to Yuti's explanation, I use my Identify skill.

Fantasy Rabbit

Level: 77, Mana: 777, Attack: 777, Defense: 777, Agility: 777,

Intelligence: 777, Luck: 777

Skills: Maximize, Minimize, Danger Sense, Urgent Evade

Lucky stats indeed. Although its actual luck stat is quite low.

It's a skill set I'm not used to seeing, which is what interests me more.

"Can the Maximize and Minimize skills be used to change its size?"

"Affirmative. When an enemy spots it, it can choose between making itself bigger to scare them way or making itself smaller to be able to flee without detection. But it's the Danger Sense and Urgent Evade skills that are really formidable."

"Huh?"

"With its Danger Sense, it can detect even the faintest of murderous, hostile, or harmful intent. So if you want to kill one of these rabbits, you have to attack it from its blind spot, without letting it pick up on your murderous intent. Either that or you've got to kill it quick, before it can run. But the Urgent Evade skill will transport the Fantasy Rabbit to safety the instant it picks up on any hostile intent. So the best way to kill it is to attack it without any killing intent at all."

"Er, how are you supposed to do that...?"

How do you attack something without any hostile intent? I mean, when you try to kill something, or even just hit it, it's going to notice, right? I certainly can't imagine how it could possibly be done...

Hearing Yuti's explanation, I realize my chances of defeating a Fantasy Rabbit at my current level of skill are slim, and I sigh heavily.

"Hmm, though I'm curious about what kinds of item drops it yields...let's just leave it and move on."

"...? Why?"

"Why...? I mean... It's impossible, right? Defeating it without any hostility..."

"Observe."

Yuti readies her bow, the one I returned to her the other day.

Closing one eye, she focuses on the Fantasy Rabbit, and...

"...Hmph."

...she looses a sharp arrow.

The arrow instantly pierces the Fantasy Rabbit's neck, and just like that, the Fantasy Rabbit turns into a bunch of light particles before disappearing.

Seeing this, Yuti huffs proudly.

"Answer. Eliminate any murderous intent, hostility, or harmful ambitions, and then proceed to the kill."

"That's some methodology you've got there."

I mean...I understand what she's getting at, but is it something I can pull off? No way.

While I'm still thinking about that, I suddenly notice something.

"Huh? You know, if you'd used that skill of yours just now when you fought against us...you might have actually won...?"

"Incorrect. At that moment in time, I could not suppress the Demon power. Therefore, I could not hide my Demon power from enemies. Now, though, my Demon powers have subsided, so I was able to successfully suppress my killing intent. Demon powers, see, are often connected to a murderous aura and general hostility."

"I see..."

I can't say I'm thrilled, but it looks like those Demon powers helped us out. Still, if she hadn't acquired those Demon powers to begin with, she'd no doubt never have attacked us.

"More importantly, let's examine the item drops from the Fantasy Rabbit. For some reason, there appear to be more than there usually are when it's just me..."

I still don't know for sure, and I haven't checked Yuti's stats, but it seems her luck stats are higher than mine, so that may play a part. Still, I'm not the one who defeated it, so I guess I can't say for sure.

Together, we go through the Fantasy Rabbit's item drops.

Yellow Fur of the Lucky Rabbit—A Fantasy Rabbit's fur. Cloaks made from this extremely soft fur are very popular among the aristocracy and can be sold for staggeringly high prices. However, since the appearance of the Fantasy Rabbit itself is rare, it is unlikely to be on the market.

Size-Changing Pills—A rare drop item from a Fantasy Rabbit. Anyone who takes one of these pills will be able to change their size at will. The ability becomes permanent.

Urgent Evade Ring—A rare drop item from a Fantasy Rabbit. Once a day, the wearer of this ring can teleport to a safe zone the moment they sense danger. The safe zone must be set in advance.

Lucky Robe—A rare drop item from a Fantasy Rabbit. Adjusts the luck of the wearer.

In addition to these, we've obtained something of a rank that I've never seen before in the Weald...a D-rank Magic Stone.

"Isn't this quite an incredible set of equipment...?"

"Affirmative. And unexpected. Although it won't directly make the bearer stronger, it will give great stabilizing safety effects."

Like Yuti says, it's not like this set of equipment is going to suddenly confer superpowers, but the ability to automatically teleport to a set safe zone in the event of a critical situation will be a huge boon. We could scarcely have done any better for Kaori's equipment.

If we set the safe zone of the ring as the sage's house in the other world, her safety is assured.

Also, I'm pleased with the equipment item known as the Lucky Robe. It looks like a plain brown robe, but luck adjustment will come in handy. Even Kaori will be able to wear it with ease.

The only issue is...

"How are we supposed to use these pills...?"

"Unsure."

"Oh... Well, I guess we don't really need them right now...?"

I'm curious about how they can make a person bigger or smaller, but I can't quite bring myself to try them out. If I ended up getting bigger, it might draw too much attention on Earth. Probably nothing crazy would happen, but...I'd rather not take the risk.

"Still, they might come in handy, so I guess I'll keep them."

For example, if an enemy's too strong, and we can't defeat it, growing bigger might make our attacks more effective.

Even after we've gotten what we were looking for, we continue hunting a while longer, tag-teaming with Night to fight beasts and learning a lot from Yuti's fighting style. A most fruitful and fulfilling time.

* * *

"So, Kaori, I managed to get you some equipment."

"What's this ...?"

Having fulfilled my promise to Kaori, I hand over the items we obtained.

Kaori receives them timidly, but her eyes light up with excitement.

Pleased with her reaction, I give her a full explanation of the items.

"So first off, that ring can automatically teleport its wearer to a safe zone in the case of danger, so no matter what happens, you should be perfectly safe as long as you have this ring, I think. I've set the safe zone as this house."

"Wow, what an amazing effect..."

Like Kaori said, the ring's power is pretty amazing. Honestly, I wouldn't mind having one myself. But since I haven't encountered another Fantasy Rabbit since the first time, I only have the one, and it's earmarked for Kaori.

"Also, that robe should have a stabilizing effect on your luck stats, Kaori. I don't know how effective it's going to be, but it's definitely better than nothing. And more importantly, your...Earth clothes, I mean...would kinda stand out in this world."

"I was so busy thinking about all the magic and skills, I hadn't realized, but... No doubt there are all kinds of cultural differences... Different clothes, different technology..."

"Exactly. We won't be able to hide you completely, but these robes should conceal what you're wearing underneath, to a certain extent."

"Thank you so much!"

After Kaori thanks me brightly, her expression immediately clouds over.

"Um... It might sound weird, me asking this now, but...are you sure this is okay?"

"Huh?"

"Maybe I'm asking too much of you... These items you gave me... They're obviously really valuable..."

"No, no, don't worry. You've already done so much for me, Kaori..."



In fact, Kaori really has been a huge help, up to and including getting Yuti enrolled in school.

Because of Kaori's help, there's much less to worry about now when it comes to Yuti living on Earth.

...Although that's not to say there aren't still a few concerns.

As I mull over those thoughts, Yuti, clad in her original white dress and accompanying us to the capital, nods slightly.

"Confirmed. Kaori, you've taught me a lot. I am looking forward to going to this...school. Thank you."

"Aw, Yuti..."

Yuti, the direct recipient of Kaori's generosity, seems grateful as well.

"...All right. Then I'll use these items gladly."

As she speaks, Kaori puts on the ring and pulls on the robe.

"Okay, it looks like Kaori's ready, so let's go right away."

"All right! So how long does it take to get to the capital?"

"Ah, about that... We could walk, but it'll take up the day. This time, I was thinking we'd use teleportation magic."

"Teleportation magic, you say?"

I've never explained teleportation magic, of course, and so Kaori responds by tilting her head quizzically. Yuti's eyes, however, widen, and she stiffens as if shocked.

"...Surprised. Can you really use teleportation magic?"

"Huh? Well, yeah..."

"If so...then you are indeed formidable, Yuuya. Even Demons and Deities cannot do so. Of course, it might be possible to achieve a similar effect via skills instead of magic. Or with a ring, such as the one you gave Kaori. Although that is an item for individual use, so it's not as widely applicable as teleportation magic."

"I-I see..."

Lexia mentioned that, too, so...teleportation magic is pretty heavy stuff. I mean, that's why I try to use it in a way that won't attract attention. If someone caught me, that would be really bad. But it's too convenient to let it go to waste.

"Well, this time, rather than going directly to the capital, I'll be teleporting us to a location a little farther away to reduce the risks of anyone noticing."

The spot I used when I visited the royal capital last time would be a good choice. No one seemed to be around then.

And so I cast my teleportation magic.

The space in front of our eyes distorts, creating an opening large enough for a single person to pass through.

Beyond that, we can see a landscape different from the current one, and there, in the distance, we can see the royal capital.

Kaori and the others seem surprised all over again by the actual teleportation magic, but the next moment, Kaori seems dazzled by the other world city that has appeared.

* * *

"So this is a city in another world!"

Once safely inside the royal capital, Kaori's eyes sparkle as she looks all around her.

"Kaori, your eyes are going to roll right out of your head. Be careful."

"Ah! R-right. I just got a bit overexcited."

"Kaori. You're like a wide-eyed kid."

"...I mean, you had a similar reaction to Earth, right, Yuti?"

"...Whatever."

Actually, when Yuti first left my house on Earth, she was such a fish out of water, you couldn't even really compare her to how Kaori is now. She was a

bundle of nerves... I mean, well, she'd been about to totally freak out.

She tried to climb the walls of houses and telephone poles and was looking around her so much that I was worried she'd twist her head right off her neck.

"Anyway... Once we drew near to the capital, it suddenly came back to me, and I was pretty panicked, but in the end, we were able to enter with Yuti in our party without any issue."

Yeah, it looked like things would take a turn for the worse... After all, Yuti is the one who tried to kill Prince Reigar.

I'd almost completely forgotten about it, but while we were going through the formalities at the entrance, I suddenly remembered and got really anxious.

"Forget it. We were allowed in. No issue."

"I mean, I guess you're right..."

"Hypothesis. I'm not even known to the soldiers at the lowest level. That's why they let me in."

"Hmm...I guess so...?"

Actually, considering Yuti's combat prowess...an ordinary soldier can't hope to match up to her if she really brings her A game to a fight.

The gatekeepers, and the soldiers for that matter, seemed a little preoccupied, which has me slightly concerned...

Well, there's no way of knowing what's going to happen, and there's certainly no point worrying about it. I'll just...shelve my concerns for now.

Despite Yuti's teasing, Kaori seems like she can't resist looking around any longer. Her head swivels, and she suddenly seems to realize something.

"Er, Yuuya?"

"Yeah? What's up?"

"Um...is this town always like this?"

"Like what...?"

"Uh, it's just that the town seems quite bustling... Which I expected, but

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maybe not quite like this...?"
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"Hmm."

Come to think of it... I'd picked up on that as well.

The gatekeepers earlier seemed like they were in some sort of hurry. And now, looking around the city again, I can see that the city folk are also busily rushing about.

But no one's standing around chatting or laughing. It's like they're all in some kind of hurry.

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"Perhaps something's happened..."
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"...Lord Yuuya?!"
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"Fh?"

While I'm looking around, I suddenly hear someone call out to me.

When I turn my attention to the source, I see Owen standing there with a stunned expression on his face.

Owen, seemingly frozen with surprise over seeing me here, soon snaps out of it and dashes over.

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"Lord Yuuya, what are you doing here?!"
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"Er, well, Kaori wanted to see the city, so we're doing a bit of sightseeing..."

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"Lady Kaori... Sightseeing, you say?"
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Owen seems surprised by what I've just said. Then he turns his attention to Yuti, who's standing behind me looking bored, and he leaps on the spot.

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"L-Lord Yuuya! That girl there...!"
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"Huh? Oh, it's not what it looks like!"

"Isn't it?! She is the one who, along with Prince Reigar..."

Yikes! Indeed, Owen is one of the few who saw Yuti's face up close!

Owen looks ready to throw down, which draws the attention of soldiers and onlookers around us. The situation is getting dicier by the second.

Kaori seems panicked by the situation, but the actual person in question, Yuti, doesn't seem bothered. Hey, this is because of you, you know!

"O-Owen... Let's go somewhere private where I can explain everything..."

"...All right. If that girl acts out here, I won't be able to properly neutralize her..."

Although looking a touch regretful, Owen seems willing to hear me out for now. We follow him to somewhere a little less populated.

There, I explain in detail about how Yuti attacked my house, and about the Deity and Demon powers, and everything.

After listening to it all, Owen clutches his temples.

"Goodness... Demon power... Like something out of a fairy tale, but it's really come true... More importantly, why does it seem that so many dangerous individuals congregate around you, Lord Yuuya? ... Well, in any case, this isn't an issue a single country can overcome..."

"I... I'm sorry about all this..."

"No, no, there's no need for you to apologize, Lord Yuuya. But I never would have guessed you are a disciple of a Deity..."

"I mean, I figured you might have noticed..."

I mean, right? Thanks to Master Rabbit, I learned how to kick and fight, but I never expected to end up tangling with individuals with Demon powers...

And now it's all ended up like this...

I find myself gazing off into the distance, and that's when Owen, still looking a little wary, asks me something else.

"So that girl... Yuti? Is she all right?"

"Well..."

"Don't worry. I have no interest in the prince or this country anymore. I will defeat the Demons. That's all."

"Yuti..."

Yuti, seemingly unconcerned until now, finally speaks up.

Hearing her words, Kaori looks sad, somehow.

Kaori doesn't know the details of Yuti's situation, but she must have guessed from the look in Yuti's eyes and the frightened tone of her voice that she is carrying a heavy burden. Personally, I'd prefer it if Yuti forgot about the Demon and lived her life, but that would probably be hard for her to do...and it's not something I can really involve myself in so easily.

Owen's eyes widen slightly over Yuti's response, then he heaves a sigh.

"Haaah... From my standpoint, I'd like to arrest her in accordance with the laws of the kingdom, but...that might not be possible, due to her physical strength, and also...it does seem there are some complicated circumstances at play here. For now, I shall trust the words of both Lord Yuuya and Yuti alike."

"Oh, thank you very much!"

What a relief! If this had gone badly, or differently, I might have been viewed as an accomplice and arrested.

I take a second to feel relieved, then I decide to ask Owen about what's causing the odd atmosphere in the city.

"By the way, we just arrived in town, but what's going on here? It seems like everyone's agitated, unlike last time..."

"Ah. Yes... About that..."

Having said that much, Owen seems to suddenly think of something. He bows to me.

"Lord Yuuya!"

"Er, what? What now?!"

"Please, Lord Yuuya... Could you lend me your strength?"

"Say what now?"

Since I have no idea what he's talking about, my response is an unintelligent one.

I look at the others for help, but Yuti and Kaori both look equally confused.

Night and Akatsuki... Ah, yeah, no change.

"Could you please explain what you mean?"

"Actually, there is a valley near the Kingdom of Arselia, where the legendary dragon is said to sleep."

"Haaah..."

"Yes. The legendary dragon from the legend...may have awakened."

"...'Scuse me?"

Huh. A legendary dragon...has awakened?

"Whaaat?!!!"

"D-dragon... Whaaat?! Aren't they, like, mythical creatures?"

I haven't seen a single dragon since I started visiting this world, so I'm just as surprised as Kaori. And it's not just any dragon. It's a legendary dragon.

"Wait a minute! What do you mean by 'legendary'...?"

"Of course, it was seen as something fanciful, like something in a fairy tale, but now it appears that it actually does exist..."

"What the heck...?"

From Owen's somber demeanor, it's easy to see he's not lying. Wait, that means he's serious!

Well, the way I see it, legendary or not, the existence of a dragon is surprising enough.

But the mention of the word *legendary* seems to have done the trick for Yuti, who's been looking bored until now. Her eyes are wide, and she's all stiff.

"Surprise. I've only ever heard rumors about it. I always thought it was just superstition."

"Well, for me, Deities and Demons are the kind of thing I'd expect to hear about in fairy tales..."

Right, but I feel like we're way past that.

It doesn't really click for me, but thinking about Deities and Demons... Well,

they're Legendary-class, right? So seen like that, what level would a sage be? ... Hmm, there's something to think about.

"Er, well... The existence of the dragon, the fact it's awoken... Yes, it's all quite surprising. But based on the weird atmosphere in this city...it's not really a good thing, is it?"

"I would have to say that it does not seem so."

"It doesn't seem so?"

His answer's so ambiguous...I end up parroting him in confusion. But Owen responds to me with a grim expression on his face.

"Though it embarrasses me to say, I do not know."

"Eh?"

"After all, dragons were thought to be mere folklore. Whether they are friendly to humans or not...I have no idea."

"I—I see..."

While I'm just listening to Owen, Kaori speaks up.

"Um, so what does the legend say?"

"Hmm? Well, typical legend tropes and lore. A dragon that has existed since the dawn of creation now sleeps here. Like that."

"The...the dawn of creation..."

A dragon as old as this world? How old is that, I wonder? And how long do dragons live anyhow?

"So then we really don't know anything..."

"Right. Also, like I said, it *might* have awoken. We don't even know for sure yet."

"Well, why do people think it might have awoken?"

"There came a roar so loud, it seemed to shake the world, and after that, the monsters inhabiting the valley began to migrate...as if fleeing something."

"Really?"

"Did the roar not reach your house, Lord Yuuya? In the royal capital, the impact of that roar was enough to cause damage to houses and the castle walls..."

"What, it was that loud?! I didn't hear anything... You didn't hear anything, either, did you, Yuti?"

"Negative. I heard no such sound."

"That's odd. A roar that loud, I believed, would surely reach the Weald..."

When the Bloody Ogre attacked the sage's house, I did hear something, so I don't think a roar would be any exception... Ah, but wait...?

As Owen said, if the roar was able to destroy not only the walls of the house but also the walls of the castle, would it make sense for it to be interpreted as some kind of attack and therefore blocked by the power of the sage's house? If so, a sage who can easily block the roar of a legendary dragon... That would really be formidable. Or should I say amazing?

"Anyway, in order to find out for sure if the legendary dragon has awakened, a group of our knights decided to investigate the valley. However, as I said earlier, the monsters in the valley seem to have fled, and they ended up attacking the surrounding villages. We were too busy handling the attacks to even begin investigating. And any investigation will be most difficult, since there are so many monsters inhabiting the depths of the valley... It's precisely because of the location itself that we haven't been able to find out whether the legendary dragon exists or not..."

"I see..."

"Therefore, I would like you, Lord Yuuya, resident of the Weald, which is even more dangerous than the valley where the legendary dragon sleeps... I would like you to help us investigate this!"

"Huh?! Is the Weald really that much more dangerous?!"

I've heard plenty about how dangerous the Weald is, but...what's really the deal with it, I wonder?

Kaori had no idea my house is in such a dangerous place, so she turns pale

when Owen brings it up. I wonder if she'll believe me even if I explain that we're well protected by the sage's power...

"Well...from what I've heard, I don't really think I'm going to be able to help much..."

"Not so! The only monsters that appear there are of the Weald's Bloody Ogre class!"

"Ah, I guess it's okay, then."

"...Well, from our point of view, the Bloody Ogre is a monster that can only be faced by those prepared for a terrible death, though..."

"What was that?"

Owen mutters something in a low voice, but I can't quite catch it. What'd he say?

Still, I'd like to help out Owen and his people if I can...

"Um, how far is this valley from the royal capital?"

"Oh, right... It's on the opposite side of the Weald, but it only takes about half a day's travel."

"Half a day..."

If we go now, we can reach the valley, but it will take up the whole day. We won't be able to tour the royal capital.

Realizing this, I turn to Kaori, who's looking at me with serious eyes.

"Um, Yuuya..."

"Yeah?"

"If you want to...I'd like you to accept the request."

"Eh?"

"If there are people in trouble right now who are looking to you for help, then...I'd like you to help them. I'd be happy to leave sightseeing in the royal capital for another time."

"Well, if you're sure, Kaori... I'd certainly like to help, so this simplifies things."

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"Besides, I'm also curious about that legendary dragon!"
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"Eh?"

Both Owen and I raise our brows in surprise. She's curious about the legendary dragon...

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"Really?!"
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"You mean you want to come, too, Kaori?!"

"Am I not allowed?"

"I mean... I'm not saying that, but this is dangerous stuff, you know?"

"Oh, I'll be fine! After all, I have that ring you gave me!"

"Hmm..."

But as expected, I'm reluctant to take her to a place where there are legendary dragons and other formidable beings...

"Yuuya. I'm going, too."

"Eh, you too, Yuti?"

Yuti looks at me with the same expression of resolve that Kaori wears.

"Affirmative. I'm curious about the legendary dragon as well. Besides, I'm a force to be reckoned with, so if you're going to a dangerous place, I'll be of some use."

"Hmm... I can't say I'm thrilled, what with the risk and all, but your abilities are far superior to ours in terms of overwhelming power... Considering the situation, you'd definitely be an asset."

As Owen nods solemnly, Yuti continues.

"Convenient indeed. If I go along, I can also protect Kaori."

"Oh, you'll protect Kaori?"

"Of course. Kaori taught me a lot about Earth. I will protect her."

"Aw, Yuti..." Kaori murmurs, seeming moved by what Yuti is saying.

Hmm, with everything that's been said, it's hard for me to refuse now... And

Kaori does have that ring we got for her. Maybe it'll be all right...?

"...Okay, Kaori, let's all go together."

"Yay!"

"So, Owen... We will participate in the investigation, too."

"Oh, I see! That's very appreciated!"

"However, if possible, I would like to leave now..."

"If that's the case, I'll give you a map to the valley. Also, if you really want to go right away, I recommend you prepare some food to take with you."

After getting a map and some pointers from Owen, we immediately set off toward the valley.

The food Owen mentioned can be easily taken care of. All we need to do is teleport to the house when we get hungry. Problem solved.

More importantly...I'm excited. I can't wait to find out if the dragon really exists.

CHAPTER 3

The Legendary Dragon

It takes us half a day to reach the valley from the royal capital, just as we were told.

Incidentally, it isn't half a day on foot, but by horse-drawn carriage.

If I'd ever been to the valley before, we could have teleported there in an instant, but unfortunately it's my first time there, so that's not possible.

So Owen arranged a carriage for us, and we were dropped off near the valley.

Truly, walking this far would have been tough on Kaori, if not on myself, Yuti, Night, and Akatsuki.

"Ugh...this is my first time riding in a carriage, but my butt hurts so much..."

I've ridden in a carriage once before, but it wasn't as painful for me then as it seems to be for Kaori now. Maybe the difference in our stats is the reason.

"Um...are you okay? Do you want to stop for a while to rest?"

I'd decided in advance that we'd only go as far as Kaori's physical condition allowed, but when I check in with her, she shakes her head.

"No, it's okay! Instead, let's go meet the legendary dragon as soon as possible!"

I can't hold back a wry smile as Kaori points toward the valley with sparkling eyes.

Actually, after bringing her here, I've discovered that Kaori has a surprisingly strong desire for adventure.

Even back on Earth, she acts somewhat sheltered, yet she seems to really revel in new experiences. But it's not just Kaori. I'm excited about the legendary

dragon, too.

However, we don't know if it's friendly yet, so we should probably proceed with caution.

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"Advice. Kaori, stay close to me and Yuuya."
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"R-right..."

"Night, please keep an eye on Kaori. Akatsuki, would you...?"

"Woof!"

"Oink?!"

Night responds cheerfully, but Akatsuki stomps on the ground, as if to suggest I'm out of my mind. I mean, yeah. I can't imagine Akatsuki in combat. I've never actually seen the little guy fight before...

"No, Akatsuki, I just meant...if we get hurt, please heal us, okay?"

"Oink? Oink!"

I quickly explain myself, and Akatsuki snorts briefly as if to say *Oh, all right, then.* So cute.

With all our preparations complete, we set foot in the valley.

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"Yuuya. The monster went that way."

"Roger!"

Shortly after entering the valley—just as Owen predicted—monsters start attacking us, one after another.

It's different here from the Weald, where I'm used to fighting, and many of the monsters are new to me, too.

The monster I'm currently fighting is the first type we encountered since entering this valley. A drooling wolf-type monster called a Hungry Fang.

These monsters aren't super furry like Night. They're skinny, and they attack us in packs.

However, as Owen said beforehand, their fighting strength is on par with a Bloody Ogre, so I'm able to handle them without too much sweat.

After defeating the group of Hungry Fangs that attack us, we take a breather.

"Huh... Seems like they're not so difficult to slay, but they're still fairly formidable."

"Affirmative. The Hungry Fang is always hungry, so when it hunts its prey, it's highly motivated."

"I see... But it seems the only items they drop are Magic Stones..."

All that remains in the place where the Hungry Fangs disappeared is a bunch of B-rank Magic Stones. Considering I got the armor I'm currently wearing from a Bloody Ogre, there's apparently not much point defeating Hungry Fangs even if they are the same class.

"I usually get a variety of items in the same drop, so it's sort of disappointing to get shortchanged like this."

"Disagree. You're the odd one, Yuuya. Getting all kinds of drop items."

"Eh?"

Really? Every time I defeat an opponent, they always drop some kind of item. Although it's unusual for me to get any rare drops.

While I'm casually picking up the Magic Stones, Kaori, whom Night kept well guarded throughout, approaches me.

"Thank you for your hard work. Sorry I can't do anything..."

"Don't worry about that. I've made up my mind to keep you safe."

"Affirmative. Kaori, there's no need to worry. We all have our strengths and weaknesses."

"Thank you."

Kaori bows her head.

Man... Yuti's so caring toward Kaori, it's hard to believe she used Demon power to attack us mere days ago. But Kaori welcomed Yuti with open arms on Earth. And as a result, Yuti really warmed up to her.

In any case, it's a good result for Yuti, who previously swore to kill humans.

"Well, it's been a while since we entered the valley, but I think we should take a break and have some food. It's an unfamiliar place we're in, so I think it's better to rest early rather than risk postponing it."

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"I agree. It's important to be careful."
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"Yes... I think so, too!"
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Night and Akatsuki bark and grunt along with Yuti and Kaori. I activate my teleportation magic again, but just as I'm about to send us all back to the sage's house, Yuti suddenly stops me.

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"Yuuya."

"Hmm?"

"Suggestion. Let's eat here."

"Eh?"
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"Reasoning. Eating in nature makes food taste more delicious. This place is very nice."

Just as Yuti says, the valley we're currently in, where the legendary dragon is said to sleep, is surrounded by steep rocky mountains on both sides, but the valley itself is blessed with nature. It's filled with plants I've never even seen in the Weald. A river runs through the valley, making the air feel fresh, and everything is covered with moss.

The Weald is certainly filled with nature, too, but there you can't sit down and have a picnic near a flowing stream like you can in this valley.

"Hmm...but are you sure it's safe? I mean, won't the smell of cooking attract monsters?"

"Don't worry. We can handle whatever comes along. But if you're still worried, I can cast a barrier."

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"Eh?"
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I grunt in response to Yuti's strange comment, but meanwhile, Yuti starts to look dazed, her eyes fixed somewhere in the distance.

Then...

"...I've foreseen it."

"You've foreseen...what?"

Without responding, Yuti readies her bow and promptly shoots a large number of arrows into the sky.

"Now we'll be fine."

"How?!"

I have no idea what the point of that was... I'm completely lost here!

And it's not just me, either. Kaori and the others look equally confused. We exchange glances, unsure what Yuti's up to.

Seeing this, Yuti explains.

"I can see the future."

"Say what now?"

"Of course, not perfectly, but I am highly accurate. So I shot in advance so that the arrows will hit the target just in time for the prey to arrive, according to my predictions."

"…"

Kaori seems taken aback by Yuti's blunt explanation. But yeah... Yuti probably does have some pretty crazy abilities. Like when she predicted that chunk of rebar would fall on the mother and baby when we went shopping.

Future predictions... Okay, I get that... But shooting arrows to hit enemies that haven't even appeared yet...?

My thought process goes that far until I remember that when I fought Yuti, she used certain mysterious attacks on me...

"I used the same technique when we fought, Yuuya. See?"

"Eh?"

Yuti turns her gaze toward the edge of the forest, and Kaori and I also turn to look in that direction. Then out of nowhere, a Hungry Fang, the kind of beast we

fought earlier, comes charging at us, drool dripping from its maw!

"Whoa?!"

Caught completely unawares, I quickly raise my weapon, but Yuti's arrow strikes the Hungry Fang right between the eyes—though she makes no movement.

The Hungry Fang turns into a ball of light particles, which then disappear.



"See? It's my barrier."

She wasn't kidding!

I mean, anyone with a Deity title is serious business, but Yuti isn't a full-fledged Deity, just a disciple, right? ... Wait, so that means if she was a bona fide Deity, she'd be even scarier than she is now!

I'm dumbfounded all over again by Yuti's ability as she casually turns her gaze toward me.

"Don't worry. Now we can eat delicious food right here. Yuuya, let's cook."

"...All right."

Thanks to Yuti, everything seems to be fine for the time being. So with a plan to cook lunch, I activate teleportation magic again and connect the distorted space to my house.

Of course, all the cooking and such will be done on Earth, so I need to go back anyway, but I can easily handle that on my own.

"Okay, I guess I'll make lunch."

When I think of outside meals, barbecue or curry usually come to mind. So this time, I decide to make curry.

After quickly putting together a pot of curry, I return to the valley to find that Night and Akatsuki have rolled over some large stones that were scattered nearby. On closer inspection, it seems Kaori and Yuti have prepared a simple table and chair setup using the stones.

"You set the table. Thanks, guys."

"No, no! We left the cooking to you, Yuuya, so this was the least we could do."

Kaori laughs and smiles, and then she seemingly gets a whiff of the pot I'm carrying.

"That smell... You made curry!"

"Yeah. I mean, when I think of food to eat outside, I can't help but think of Japanese curry."

I mean, the school field trip involved making curry outdoors, but I just hadn't expected to procure all the ingredients, too.

"Oh, totally! For picnics, it's gotta be sandwiches and rice balls, but when it comes to camping, curry is the way to go!"

"...It's strange. I've never encountered that smell before. However...it makes me hungry..."

Yuti, who clearly doesn't know about curry, peers curiously into the pot while rubbing her stomach. Yeah, the scent of curry always whets my appetite, too.

I'm as hungry as everyone else, so I quickly dish out the curry into bowls I've brought, and I serve everyone.

Yuti stares at the curry in front of her with an even more inquisitive expression.

"The color is strange as well. Can you really eat it?"

"Of course."

"...Hmm. It'll take a little courage. But it does smell delicious..."

Certainly, for those who don't know what curry is, its distinctive color might require a little bravery for that first taste. But for those of us who are used to eating it, it's nothing remarkable.

However, once Kaori and the others start eating, Yuti finally seems convinced, and she takes a small bite.

"Mmn?!"

Her eyes open wide, and she looks at Kaori and me with excitement.

"This is... This is...delicious! Incredibly delicious."

"Oh, really? I'm so glad you like it. And well done; you're feeding yourself now."

"Yeah. I'm learning."

"Yuuya, you're really good at cooking. This is great!"

The two of them might be praising the curry, but to be honest, all you have to

do is cut up the vegetables and boil them together with a commercially available roux... Well, I don't use just one type of roux. I make it using a blend of two seasonings, so the taste might be a little more unique than the usual. In the past, I wasn't able to do luxurious things like that, but now that I earn money by exchanging things from the other world for cash, my cooking range has expanded, or rather, I have more freedom now to get fancy with recipes.

"Munch, nom... Woof!"

"Snort. Oink, oink!"

Night and Akatsuki are digging into the curry with gusto, too. Good.

I've been distracted watching everyone else eat, but finally I take a bite of curry and nod. Yep. Tastes delicious.

As we all enjoy our curry, I suddenly notice something.

...The curry was so good, I completely forgot to be worried, but won't the smell attract monsters? With Yuti's barrier, though, we should be okay... Right?!

"Grawwwrrr!!!"

"""?i"""

"Oink!"

The voice—or roar—of something that isn't exactly a monster, echoes across the valley.

Then, just before the roar hits us, Akatsuki apparently activates the Holy Ground skill, and there's a blast of light. In all the panic, though, I can't be sure that's what's happening.

The roar shakes the surrounding trees and the ground, and the water in the river sloshes.

The mysterious roar makes us drop our curry spoons, cover our ears, and cradle our heads.

I try my best to endure the sound, and the shock finally subsides.

Realizing we're safe, we all unfreeze.

"Wh-what was that noise just now?"

"Unknown. But whatever it was, it's not normal."

Even with my ears covered, the roar seems like it scrambled my brain inside my head.

```
"Kaori, are you okay?"

"Ah, yes... Somehow... Akatsuki saved me..."
```

"Oink."

Ah, so I was right. Akatsuki did use the Holy Ground skill.

I, Yuti, and Night have our own skills to help us weather any blows, but it's not the same for Kaori.

Knowing this, Akatsuki reduced the damage that might afflict Kaori by applying the Holy Ground skill to her.

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"Thank you, Akatsuki. You're a lifesaver."

"Oink."
```

Akatsuki nods as if to say *That's right!* And the praise is definitely well-deserved. Akatsuki looks so cute all puffed up with pride.

"Ah...the curry on our plates has been blasted away, but it looks like the stuff in the pot is safe."

"Such a waste..." Yuti mutters sadly over the curry spilled on the ground.

"But more importantly, what was that sound just now? It sure wasn't a regular sound..."

The impact of the roar shook the ground and trees, and some of the trees even broke. Thank goodness Akatsuki used Holy Ground on Kaori. If not for that, Kaori would no doubt have been transported back to the sage's house.

Once I've confirmed everyone's safety, I know I need to give some thought to that sound... But Kaori speaks up first.

"Um, that sound just now...I would call it a cry of some kind... It sounded like a roar to me."

```
"A roar..."
```

A roar could mean...

I'm just starting to get a very bad feeling when suddenly, it feels like we're all floating.

```
"Huh?"
```

Whoa, what's happening? The ground begins to shake even more than before, and I realize we're lifting up off the ground with each impact.

From the paleness of her face, Yuti seems to have noticed it, too. She mutters in astonishment. "This is unpredictable. I didn't see it. The barrier was pointless..."

Yuti predicted the future earlier and shot those arrows, but arrows won't help us in our current situation.

```
After all...
"Y-Y-Yuuya..."
""
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I have an idea of what's happening now, but I can't move. The approaching sound and accompanying impacts are getting louder and louder, making it impossible for us to keep our balance.

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"The...the dragon...!"
```

"Shocking. This dragon looks exactly like the dragons in the old picture books..."

Turning timidly, I see a giant gaping dragon maw, like ones I've seen in movies and books.

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"..."
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The dragon's scales are deep purple and oddly shiny. It makes me think of that expression... Bad things come in the growing dusk.

It's spiky and regal, majestic and somber.

Though one snort from its nostrils seems likely to blow me away, I gaze

straight into the eyes of the owner of that gaping maw.

I've been fascinated by the thought of this dragon, but now confronted with it, I cannot act. Moreover, this is clearly no ordinary dragon. It's so large. Huge. Gargantuan.

It's as big as a skyscraper lying on its side.

It's so big, its flanks scrape the rocky cliffs on both sides of the valley. They're starting to crumble, as if the beast is forcing itself through.

Nothing about it is normal.

It's not just its size, but the menacing aura it gives off... It's overwhelming. And I'm not the only one feeling it. Even Yuti—who is stronger than me by far—and Night and Akatsuki are unable to move.

Then...

"GRAWWWRRR!!!"

The dragon in front of me raises its head high into the sky and once again lets out an echoing roar.

Faced with such a ridiculous situation, I only have one thought.

All right, we're dead.

I mean, any way you slice it, our goose's cooked.

Originally, we didn't even come here to fight. Owen only asked us to investigate. But now things look dire.

My mind goes blank, and I'm rendered mute, when I hear another voice... A voice this time, and not a roar.

"Hey! You little shrimps!"

"...Eh?"

I panic and swivel my head around to identify the voice, but there's no one around it might belong to.

However, it seems the others heard it, too. They all look as confused as I feel.

While we all look around to try to find the speaker, the voice rings out again.

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"You puny humans have the stones to ignore ME?"
```

"Eh?"

Couldn't be, I think, as I tip my head back so far that my neck hurts and peer up at the dragon's face.

"Are you...are you talking?"

"Indeed I am."

"The dragon's TALKING?!"

"What's your deal? Is it so strange that I speak?"

I mean, I never imagined the voice would have come from the dragon. I couldn't help reacting with shock.

"I... I just mean... I've never encountered a dragon before, you see..."

"Hmph. I don't want to be treated like any common dragon...but yes, I can both understand and speak your language. Do you know what that means?"

"Huh? ...Er, you worked hard and learned human language, right?"

"What kind of conclusion is that to draw?!"

For some reason, the dragon tuts with irritation. I mean...it asked what that means, and I can't think of anything else...

"Listen here! In other words, the fact that I know your speech means when humans say things that insult and humiliate me, I understand them perfectly!"

"I—I see?"

"Is that all you've got for a reaction?!"

Help!

I mean, I have no intention of making fun of the dragon in front of me...

Seeing the exchange between myself and the dragon, Kaori looks worried, but Yuti shoots me a glance that indicates she's got something to say. Is my response to the dragon really that wrong?

Her gaze concerns me, but I decide to ask the dragon a question anyway.

"Um, do you need something from us...? I mean, we heard you'd awoken, but is there a specific reason why you woke up?"

"Hmph! What's happened to your panicked fluster from before?"

"Uh, I think I've adjusted to you now..."

"Even though I'm very big and ferocious?!"

At first, I was extremely shocked, and I figured we were done for... But I feel better now, knowing we can at least communicate.

Anyway, if this dragon had intended to kill or eat us, it wouldn't be chatting with us like this right now.

"Well, it matters not. The reason why I woke up was because I smelled the oppressing smell of Deities and Demons...but...then to my surprise, there was a smell here that even I, who have lived since the creation of the world, did not recognize. Before I knew it, the smell drew me here."

"A...a smell?"

"Trying to play dumb? That pot near you. The smell is emanating from there!"

"Huh?"

I look at the curry pot that miraculously survived the dragon's roar earlier.

"Um, are you talking about our curry?"

"Karee? What is that?"

"Well, it's our lunch..."

The dragon frowns at this. It's oddly easy to interpret its facial expressions.

"Hmph! Don't spout nonsense. Human food consists of two forms... boiled and grilled. Don't you think it's enough to season it with plenty of salt and spices?"

I put my head to one side, confused by the dragon's mocking tone.

Maybe the dragon doesn't know human tastes and seasonings have evolved, since it has been asleep for so many years?

That may have been true in the past, but over the years, humankind has

developed new cooking methods and invented all kinds of dishes. Ah, but maybe cooking technology hasn't developed that far in this world yet.

"Hmm, would you like to try it?"

"Oh... My curry..."

Yuti's face falls.

"Ah, Yuti. After I give this dragon some curry, I'll make a fresh pot right away."

"Oh, indeed? You think I'm about to let you leave here safely?"

"Huh? You plan to keep us here?"

"...Your responses are very weird, you know."

How so? I haven't done anything strange...or said anything strange?

"But a tiny pot of karee like that won't satisfy me. What do you intend to do about that?"

"Er, I don't think there's much I actually can do about that..."

Just as it says, considering the size of the dragon in front of me, even a cauldron-sized pot wouldn't be enough. I doubt it would even get a big enough mouthful to taste it properly.

How could anything possibly satisfy that gigantic stomach?

"Ah, there is a way..."

"Hmm? A way, you say?"

"Just... I was wondering if there was a way to reduce your size, Mr. Dragon..."

"Mr... Dragon? Ah, never mind. But is there such a method?"

"There is, actually."

As I speak, I withdraw something from my Item Box.

The Size-Changing Pill from the drop where we got the protective items for Kaori.

"What is that...some kind of poison?"

"No, it's a pill that makes you smaller."

"A pill that makes you smaller?"

The dragon turns its huge face sideways and closes in on the pill, glaring at it with its big eye.

"Hmph. Something like that can make even ME smaller...?"

"Aw, don't body-shame yourself."

"What happened to the cringing attitude you had when you first set eyes on me?!"

Well, even in a tense situation, once you get past the initial nerves, it gets much easier to talk.

Although to be honest, the reason why I'm so chill is probably because none of this actually feels real. Also, I kinda want to introduce tasty human food to the dragon. With the help of Japanese ingredient manufacturing, of course.

With that in mind, I toss the pill into the dragon's mouth, though it still seems somewhat guarded. Incidentally, there are a lot of pills in the bottle, and to be honest, I don't know how many pills we'll need to get the right effect. I don't feel like I can throw in a bunch of pills without even knowing what's going to happen, so I stick with just one. I mean, ethically, I should probably test the pills on myself first...

"Y-you! Y-you really made me eat it?!"

The dragon glares at me with a terrifying expression, and I can't help quaking in fear again. But the next moment, the dragon's body begins to glow.

"Wh-what is this?! What's happening?!"

"Er, no idea...?"

"NO IDEA?!!!"

I mean, I'm guessing it's a sign it's about to start shrinking.

While the dragon panics about the strange changes in its body, Kaori, who's been watching the whole thing until now, speaks up in concern.

"S-so bright... Is the dragon going to be all right?"

"I guess so? When I got the item, the explanation didn't mention any bad side





Yes, that was one of the main reasons why I used it on the dragon without any hesitation.

With the Identify skill, if there are any side effects, they would be listed. After all, when I went to collect medicinal herbs with Lexia and Luna, I used my skill to find out about the Herb of Certain Death that Akatsuki brought me, and that's how I knew it was dangerous.

When the light finally subsides, the dragon is so small that I can hold it in my hands.

"Oh, it's over...? Wait, why are you guys looking down on me?!"

"Because you're much smaller now, Mr. Dragon."

"What?!"

At this, the dragon immediately examines itself, looking dumbfounded.

"Th-this is insane... To have grown as small as this..."

"Now you can really enjoy the curry."

"Y-yeah... Wait, no! Never mind that! Yes, a smaller body will mean easier eating, but...I can't possibly stay like this!"

"No problems there, either. I'm guessing you'll be able to change your body size at will from now on, Mr. Dragon."

"What?!"

The dragon's eyes narrow with doubt, then it looks up at the sky, jaw set with determination, and...its body begins to glow once more.

When the light subsides, the dragon is back to its original size.

"I—I really did it..."

"You really did it."

"You had no guarantees that would happen!"

Sadly, no, I didn't.

But the Identify skill did show me that body size alterations would be possible, so I never for a moment worried it'd be stuck in its new form.

Mr. Dragon seems taken aback by my reaction, but eventually its body glows once more, and all of a sudden, it's tiny again.

"Well...good. No, it's not good, but let's not worry about it at this point. Now I want what's in that pot. Get out of my way."

The dragon snatches the pot from me as it speaks.

It opens the pot and takes a deep whiff.

"Snort... Hmm, it's still an irresistible smell. However, from the color of it, I highly doubt it tastes as good as it smells."

"Dissatisfied? Then give it to me."

"What are you doing, little miss? This is mine! Get away!"

Yuti makes a grab for the curry, but Mr. Dragon sticks its snout into the pot!
"..."

I wasn't expecting it to plunge its face in there... Honestly, I'm getting a little concerned, but...

"SLURRRP!!!"

"Eh?"

An almighty slurping sound fills the air.

Then...

"Delicious! Simply scrumptious! What is this?!"

A victory for Japanese food manufacturers.

With a look of pride on my face, I explain, "This is human food. It's curry."

"It's...it's amazing!"

The dragon looks stunned for a second, then resumes slurping the curry.

As I watch it eat, I think back over our conversation, and a question comes to mind.

"Um... Now that I think about it, you said earlier that the Deities and the Demons smell, but what does that mean?"

"Nom, slurp... What? What does it mean? It means exactly what it sounds like... The annoying smell of Demons and Deities began to fill the world, and my nose woke me up against my better wishes. Spreading such a disgusting smell..."

No way! This was related to Master?

I have no idea how to respond to this new information, but the dragon, still chewing, points its snout at us and begins to sniff.

"I can smell it from you and that little girl over there, but...huh? You guys smell a little weird. The little girl smells like a mixture of Deities and Demons. And as for you..."

Having said that much, Mr. Dragon stops eating the curry, and its eyes go wide.

"Inconceivable! Why do you smell like him?"

"H-him?!"

"Don't play dumb! Who else could it be but him?"

"I mean, I don't know who you're talking about..."

"What's not getting through here? The one the humans called the sage!"

"Eh?!"

Mr. Dragon's startled me so bad, it feels like my eyes are about to pop out.

"The sage... You know the sage?!"

"Huh? Never mind me... Don't you know him?"

"I mean, things are kinda complicated for me..."

I explain to the dragon about Earth and about how I've become the new master of the sage's house and inherited the sage's magic and so on.

Mr. Dragon lets out a low growl.

"Hmm, I see... To think another world really exists... Even for me, who has lived since the creation of the world, this is the first time I've heard of it. And to create a connection between here and there... Yes, he must be wise enough

indeed to have earned the title of sage..." The dragon murmurs, gazing off into the distance.

"Um, so how do you know the sage?"

"What? Oh, right... Well, I believed us to be friends."

"Huh?"

"But I could not understand his suffering. For someone like me who had no concept of the length of a normal life, I thought it foolish to grow old and die. However, I never imagined it would be his salvation..."

The dragon's expression is somewhat somber as it speaks.

In the sage's book, he wrote that he didn't have any close friends, but I guess there were people who were worried about him...

The dragon finally finishes the curry as I'm standing there feeling bad for never having gotten to meet the sage.

"Smack, smack! My, that was good!"

"Oh, right. Well, I'm glad you enjoyed..."

But before I can finish speaking, a message appears in front of me.

"Successfully tamed Genesis Dragon."

"...Say what?"

"Hmm? What is it?"

I can't help but rub my eyes at the odd message that's appeared in front of me.

However, no matter how much I rub them, the message remains the same.

Tentatively, I tell the dragon about what I've just seen.

"Er, Mr. Dragon... I think I've, um, tamed you..."

"Huh? What do you mean? The human food you served me was indeed delicious, but I doubt that would be enough to tame ME... I... Damn, I have been tamed after all!"

The dragon seems to acknowledge this but with so much surprise that its eyes

start to bulge.

Yuti's eyes widen, too, realizing, by the dragon's admission, that it's true... I've really tamed it.

Kaori doesn't understand what we mean by "tame" and looks quizzical. Night and Akatsuki are both quiet, too.

"Why? How? How could I have possibly been tamed?!"

"Erm... My bad?"

"I don't want an apology! Reverse it now!"

"What? But I don't even know how to do that! I mean, it's not super convenient for me to have tamed a dragon, either, you know?"

"Having me tamed is not...not CONVENIENT for you?!"

Sorry, I'm just being honest here.

I mean, I can't exactly bring a dragon to Earth with me. If not for the big wings, I could maybe pass it off as some kind of rare lizard, but I wouldn't be able to stop it from flying... And if it's seen doing that on Earth, no explanation I can think of would suffice.

Also...

"Um, speaking of convenience... Originally, we heard a dragon had awakened and came here to investigate and find out if it was true..."

"What? What do you mean?"

"There's legend that a dragon was sleeping in the depths of this valley, but no one believed it. However, suddenly the monsters in the valley started migrating, almost like they were trying to escape from something. And then everyone heard a great dragon roar, making them wonder if the legend were true...and if so, what sort of action the dragon might take..."

"Hmph. Well, I guess it can't be helped that modern humans don't know about me... After all, it's been thousands of years since I last woke up."

"Th-thousands of years?!"

"Yes. It's true that I woke up due to the Deity and Demon stench, but I was

due to wake up soon anyway, before I got too hungry. After waking, I hunted and devoured some nearby monsters that were close at hand, but...after that, I guess they all fled."

"I—I see..."

I have a lot I want to say, but the fact that the dragon hasn't woken for thousands of years must mean the sage lived thousands of years ago, too. No wonder people don't seem to know about him, same as the dragon.

It's a huge thing to realize, and I don't really feel I can comment on the dragon's troublesome behavior, either. As I'm mulling things over, the dragon rolls around on the ground, looking disgruntled.

"Hmph... Well, what are we to do now?"

"Huh? Well... I guess, since I've tamed you, I should give you a name."

"That's your concern?! I mean, I'm not saying it's not important, but..."

"Personally, I feel like Mr. Dragon would be fine, but..."

"Unacceptable! If you're going to name me, give me a name that's befitting of how awe-inspiring I am!"

Since the dragon seems insistent, I decide to think of a name more carefully.

Incidentally, it seems the dragon has already accepted the fact it's been tamed. Even though it still doesn't seem very happy about it.

I look at the dragon again and think hard.

The dragon has an impressive appearance, befitting that of a legendary dragon, and its scales are a combination of deep purple, black, and vermilion, making it look rather regal.

"Hmm... Then how about Ouma?"

"Ouma?"

"Yes. Hmm, how to put this... Have you heard the expression *Bad things come* at dusk? It popped into my mind when I first saw you..."

Ouma... "Early evening." Its coloring makes me think of that time of day...and I end up speaking without thinking, but...

The dragon murmurs the word *Ouma* to itself several times, then nods.

"Ouma... Ouma. Yes, I like it. From today forth, I am Ouma."

"Er, okay."

"By the way, what are your names? Against my will it may be, but you have indeed become my master. I should at least know your name, should I not?"

It takes the dragon—or should I say Ouma from now on?—pointing out he doesn't know our names for me to realize I should introduce us all.

After listening to my introductions, Ouma nods again.

"Yuuya, Kaori, Yuti. Plus Night and Akatsuki... On closer inspection, what a fascinating bunch of characters you are."

"Are we?"

"You're not aware of it yourselves? Yuuya and Yuti, you smell like a strange mix of Deities and Demons, but Kaori does not give off any strange or threatening odor at all. It makes me wonder why she is here with you. As for Night and Akatsuki... Hmm. Seeing the two of them, perhaps it is not so strange a thing after all that I myself have been tamed..."

"Huh? I-is that so?"

"...Surely not, but...could it be that you do not know Night's species? Akatsuki is a little special, though, so it wouldn't be surprising if you didn't know about him..."

"Oh, but I do know. I'm pretty sure Night's a Black Fenrir."

"Huh?"

For some reason, it's not Ouma who grunts in surprise, but Yuti, who's hanging back listening to the conversation.

"Yuti... What's up?"

"K-Kaori. Did Yuuya just say..., 'Black Fenrir'?"

"Y-yes. That's right. That's the type of wolf Night is."

"Two legendary creatures at the same time..."

"Huh?"

I see Yuti clutch her temples, but I have no idea what's going on.

But then Ouma sighs and starts explaining.

"Hah... Yuti's response is justified. Night is not of a species that has lived since creation like me, but when it comes to fighting strength, their species is indeed on par with my own."

"Eh?"

"Currently, Night is still a cub and must still be growing, but if you think about it...I've never even heard of a tamed Black Fenrir. And with you as his tamer, Yuuya, he might become the strongest being in the history of the Black Fenrir species."

"Huh..."

I had no idea Night was a creature on par with Ouma in terms of strength.

Although I knew he had to be pretty tough, since I found him in the Weald to begin with.

"Night! You're something special, aren't you?"

"Woof? Woof..."

"Oink! Oink!"

"Huh? Oh yes, Akatsuki, I know you're special, too."

"Oink? Oink."

"Woof..."

Night doesn't really seem to understand what I'm saying and quirks his head before snuggling up to my feet. Trying to remind me that he's special, too, Akatsuki snuggles up as well... Ah, so cute. What else matters?

"But who cares about strength when they're as cute as they are?"

"He is a magnificent beast! He has formidable fighting power, you realize?!"

"Affirmative. I've been all fired up about fighting the Demons, but with Mr. er, Ouma, and Night, once he's grown up a bit...I could take care of the Demons without any worry at all. That's how much battle power those two have."

"But really? To fight the Demons..."

"Child's play! Do not underestimate me. Normally, I'd leave you all alone because I'm not interested in humans, but I could handle a fight with a Deity or a Demon without even breaking a sweat!"

"H-how?"

"By blowing up the entire world!"

"Isn't that overkill?!"

Blowing up the entire planet? Won't that mean blowing up himself, too?

Following my train of thought, Ouma snorts with laughter.

"No need to worry about me. I can live anywhere. Blowing up a planet is no big deal. I can just find another planet to live on."

"Y-yikes, you're scary..."

"Precisely! I am to be feared! Not tamed like some pet!"

"But...you have been tamed."

"But whyyyyy?!" Ouma howls... No use asking me.

"Guhhh... If this fact cannot be reversed, I at least hope things will be a little better and easier for me. Otherwise, you'll be sorry you tamed me! Yuuya! Can you make sure I'm satisfied?!"

"Huh...? Well, I can offer Earth food...and show you around Earth..."

"Well now, isn't that interesting...?!"

Then no problem, right?

All this fang-gnashing from Ouma is making me roll my eyes internally.

"Um... Shall we head back now, then? After all, we've tamed the dragon we sought. And if Ouma is the reason why those monsters went crazy, then once Ouma's gone, things will probably go back to normal..."

"Hmph. Yes, if you came here to investigate me, then you probably have no business here anymore. As you say, Yuuya...once I'm gone, the monsters will

naturally return to normal."

"All right, so then that solves the problem. Let's get going, shall we?"

Just as I'm about to start prepping to leave, Kaori timidly raises her hand.

"Um..."

"Hmm? What's wrong, Kaori?"

"Um... Of course, we came here to investigate, but Ouma is the cause of the various problems that have been happening, right?"

"Well, I guess so."

"Don't ask me. I know nothing of human affairs."

"In that case, how should we explain things to the people in the capital... especially to Mr. Owen, who made the request?"

"Ah..."

Kaori has a point.

Right. Originally, Ouma's awakening caused a lot of trouble. Owen asked us to come here to determine whether or not the dragon really has awoken and to then report back.

But all that being true, would it really be wise for us to bring back the legendary dragon who was the cause of all the trouble?

"Wh-what should we do ...?"

"R-right...? I guess we have no choice but to be honest about things..."

"Yeah..."

I don't know what kind of reaction we'll get, but we can't really pretend otherwise, so we have no choice but to tell the truth.

Just when I thought we could finally go home, now we're faced with a new problem.

Still, no use worrying about it. We head back to the capital, dragging our heavy feet.

"What, Lord Yuuya? Could you say that again?"

"Th-that's the legendary dragon, right there."

On our arrival at the capital, we immediately went to report things to Owen, after which, for some reason, we were brought in front of Arnold.

Apparently, Arnold felt bad about asking me, a person from another country, to help out. He also said he wanted to hear directly from me all about the legendary dragon.

So now it's just us, Owen, and Arnold in the receiving chamber.

I wanted to say hello to Lexia and Luna, but they're both away on official business. No doubt the life of a princess is a busy one.

If only I could escape into more pleasant thoughts like those. Seeing me in the company of an unfamiliar dragon, Owen seems to have guessed something's up and has put off the explanations until I'm in audience with Arnold. But explaining things to Arnold makes me far more nervous than I'd be in front of just Owen.

With the situation being one I can't explain my way out of, I just tell the truth... And as expected, both Arnold and Owen react with shock, clutching at their temples.

I'm concerned about their reactions, but it's Kaori who's really sweating, finding herself in the audience of a king. I wish I could reassure her somehow, but in front of Arnold, I really can't...

Yuti, though, is cool as a cucumber, even though she recently tried to assassinate Prince Reigar.

While I'm biting my lip and marveling at the awkwardness of all this, my eye falls on Ouma, the center of all the trouble, who's lying on the floor looking irritated and bored.

"What is the issue here, human? Is my being tamed really such a big inconvenience for you people?"

"No, no! Not at all!"

"Don't deny it when all signs indicate otherwise!"

"Er...?"

Owen, trying to placate Ouma, blanches as the dragon roars angrily at him.

"Even I don't understand! But tamed I have been! So there is nothing I can do about it. Are you putting the blame on me? It is *him* you should blame!"

"All I did was cook a pot of curry..."

"It is the fault of your human food for smelling so delicious!"

It's really not my fault. And I don't think you can blame it on curry.

Well, anyway...

"So what should we do?"

"Wh-what do you mean, what should we do?" Arnold responds, cheek twitching.

"I just mean... The cause of all the trouble lately has been you, dragon...I mean, Ouma."

"What?! It's not my fault!"

"You've caused a lot of trouble for people, you know?"

"I am a dragon! Do you really think I care about the circumstances of humans?"

"Whether dragon or human, we can still try to get along. Why don't you think about how your actions might have impacted others?"

"Groooar!!!"

As I'm trying to explain things to Ouma, Owen and Arnold exchange glances.

"...Owen. Am I hallucinating? The legendary dragon is being scolded, isn't it?"

"...No, Your Majesty. It's reality."

"No need for concern. It seems that way to me, too," Yuuti said, speaking up for the first time.

"I...I see... And who are you?" the king asked.

"I'm Yuti."

"Y-Yuti? Owen, do you know this young lady?"

"Huh? Ah, well... It's hard to explain..."

"Majesty. Don't worry about the particulars."

"Quite the presumptuous one, isn't she?!"

"Yuti, stay out of this!" When he realized Yuti was speaking directly to the king, Yuuya suddenly cut in to their conversation. "Sorry about her... She's a little out of touch with society..."

"No, no, she's just plucky... But legendary dragons... Aren't they meant to be, um, bigger? It is hard to believe the roar that shook the castle could have come out of such a..."

"When I brought Lord Yuuya here, I did not know it was a legendary dragon he had with him... But Lord Yuuya told me he has an item that can change someone's size at will..."

"...Lord Yuuya...? Just who are you anyway?"

"...I mean, that's what I want to know myself..."

Arnold sighs and continues his conversation with Owen.

"So? What do you think we should do?"

"Right... Well, we can't exactly eliminate it," Owen admits.

"No, I don't think so, either. I don't know how powerful it is, but even a normal class dragon could roast most of our soldiers. And this one...has lived since the dawn of time."

"The longer a dragon lives, the stronger its magical powers and its body become... Even an entire country of warriors could not defeat it."

"Then in that case, I'd prefer it if Lord Yuuya sticks around here, in our country..."

"I think that would be difficult. Lord Yuuya is obviously a foreign aristocrat or royalty of some sort..."

"Hmm... There's really nothing we can do. Lord Yuuya has already done so much for me and for Reigar. We can't force his hand to cooperate with us..."

"But if a country that was hostile to us was able to control a legendary dragon, we'd be powerless to defend ourselves."

"Yes. In that respect, Lord Yuuya has done us a great service... And, hmm, I don't know if Lord Yuuya's country is friendly to us or not, but Lord Yuuya, at least, is our friend. And Lexia's, too...!"

"Please, don't start acting like a delusionally doting parent. Still, it seems we have no choice but to leave everything to Lord Yuuya's discretion. Lord Yuuya is already a formidable fighter. It is no surprise that he has added a dragon capable of torching nations to his party. After all, he could not continue to reside in the Weald if he was not as mighty as he so clearly is."

"He really is a fascinatingly mysterious character. But in any case, if the legendary dragon is provoked, there will be two choices: surrender or destruction. So I suppose there's no point in thinking about it too much. Now, Lord Yuuya..."

"Uh, yes?"

While I'm having a heated discussion with Ouma about not causing any trouble for humans, Arnold suddenly says my name. Yikes, what am I doing, allowing my attention to wander during an audience with the king? They won't have me executed for lèse-majesté, will they...?

I gulp, and Arnold begins to speak in a solemn and authoritative voice.

"Lord Yuuya... All matters pertaining to that dragon, I entrust unto you."

"...What?"

"We cannot talk about this incident, this...dragon, publicly. So sadly, we cannot present you with a reward. And of course, we wouldn't dream of asking anything of you. So, Lord Yuuya... We entrust all to you."

"L-leave it to me? I mean..."

While I stand flummoxed by what Arnold's saying, Owen speaks up, too.

"Lord Yuuya. To put it plainly... We are deferring all responsibility to you in

this case."

"Wow, that's really plain!"

All responsibility! It sure sounds like it!

No one knows what to do with a legendary dragon.

In the end, as Arnold decrees, there are to be no complaints made about Ouma's roar or the damage caused by the fleeing monsters that Ouma chased down for food, and thus, our audience with the king comes to an end.

Fortunately, there were no casualties caused by the monsters that escaped from the valley.

In the end, with so much going on, I never did manage to achieve my original goal of showing Kaori around the capital...

CHAPTER 4

Yuti's School Life

"Okay, everyone, take your seats. We have a new transfer student starting today."

After they returned from the other world, school vacation ended.

Yuti's junior high school experience finally began.

For Yuti, it was a whole new life, including dressing in an unfamiliar uniform and letting go of the bow she always carried with her.

Until now, Yuti had lived alone with the Deity of Arrows, her mentor, and naturally, she wasn't so good at communicating with humans. She'd been worried about how well she'd get along at school, without Yuuya or Kaori to help her.

But since Yuti never let her worries show, either in her expression or voice, Yuuya and the others hadn't noticed.

Now, Yuti was waiting nervously outside the classroom when she heard excited voices come from inside.

"A transfer student?!"

"What? I wonder if they're a boy! Or a girl!"

"A cute girl would be great!"

"Even if she's cute, doesn't mean she'd be interested in you!"

"Sh-shut up!"

"Yes, yes, please be quiet. Well then, Yuti, please come in."

u n

At the signal from Yanagi, Yuti's homeroom teacher, Yuti timidly entered the classroom.

After getting to know Yuuya and Kaori, Yuti no longer felt as much hatred and fear toward humans as she did when her master died.

That said, she still had mixed feelings, considering humans were partly responsible for her master's death.

Still, Yuti was able to differentiate and realize that none of the humans here had been involved with her loss.

Yuti's homeroom teacher, Yanagi, had a gentle personality, which Yuti was grateful for, given her circumstances.

""

The moment Yuti entered the classroom, the students stopped their clamoring and fell silent.

Yuti panicked a little over the sudden silence, wondering if she'd done something wrong. But Yanagi didn't seem concerned at all as they wrote Yuti's name on the blackboard.

"Okay, Yuti. Please introduce yourself."

"A-affirmative."

Yuti gave a small nod and took a breath, looking around at the students in the class.

"I'm...Yuti... Nice to meet you..."

Yuti had no idea what to say, so she went with a simple introduction.

Then...

"She's so cute!!!"

"Huh?!"

...the whole class squealed in unison.

"Wh-what? She's, like, incredibly cute!"

"I was hoping for a cute guy, but a girl this cute gets a pass! In fact, she's

better than any boy!"

"She looks as perfect as a little doll!"

"Yuti... So are you a foreigner?"

"Um, er..."

Yuti was completely taken aback by the students' unexpected reactions.

She'd always been able to solve problems with force, so Yuti didn't know what to do in situations where force would clearly be ineffective.

Besides, Yuti was used to treating any humans she met in the other world with suspicion. She wasn't used to being welcomed so warmly and receiving such a positive response.

"Okay, everyone, calm down. You're embarrassing Yuti. If you have any questions, please ask her during break."

Sensing Yuti's discomfort, Yanagi settled the students, flashing Yuti a gentle smile.

"Okay, Yuti. Your seat is the empty one over there."

"Understood."

Yuti took the seat the teacher pointed to, and she exhaled quietly.

Then the girl sitting next to her leaned over and spoke.

"Hey, Yuti. I'm Haruna! Nice to meet you!"

"N-nice to meet you, too..."

Yuti was a little surprised to be addressed out of the blue like that, but Haruna's cheerful and friendly manner helped to put her at ease.

* * *

Yuti made it through homeroom to the start of classes, but a big problem soon arose.

And that problem was...

"...Confused, Don't understand,"

...Yuti had never studied before, so naturally, she couldn't solve even simple academic problems.

Fortunately, Kaori taught her to write during an Earth 101 session she'd given her, so Yuti had acquired the Comprehend Languages skill there. As a result, she could speak, read, and write without any problems, but...she struggled in other aspects.

Although Yuti struggled academically, she showed her true worth in the next class, gym.

In gym class, the girls decided to play basketball, but Yuti didn't understand the rules.

"Haruna."

"Hmm? What's wrong, Yuti?"

After plucking up the courage to speak to Haruna, who was sitting next to her, Yuti asked about basketball.

"Unknown. I don't know anything about basketball."

"Oh, really?! You've never played basketball before?"

"Negative. It's the first time I've seen it."

Hearing Yuti say this, not only Haruna, but the other girls nearby were also stunned.

"Sh-she doesn't know about basketball... Are there countries out there that don't have basketball...?"

"Well then, we have to show her how to play."

Fortunately, no one made fun of Yuti. Instead, they all kindly rushed to show her what to do.

After listening to their explanations, Yuti now had some idea of the rules of basketball. She grabbed a ball that was lying nearby.

"Clarification. I put this ball in that basket. Is that right?"

"Yeah, that's right."

```
"I can throw it from anywhere?"

"Huh? Well, yeah. But you're way too far away there, you..."

"Hup."
```

Yuti jumped up on the spot and threw the basketball toward the hoop from across the court.

The ball went straight through the basket without even touching the net.

Yuti landed safely on the spot and turned around to check with Haruna.

```
"Was that okay?"
"..."
```

However, no one could answer Yuti's question. Not only the female students, but also the boys who were taking classes in the gymnasium, and even the teacher, were stunned by Yuti's impressive physical ability.

```
"What? Is something amiss?"

"Ha! 'Is something amiss?' ... Is this really your first time playing basketball?"

"Affirmative."

"No way!"
```

Yuti didn't know the rules of any Earth sport, let alone basketball, but no one could believe that after seeing the amazing basket she'd just made.

Once Yuti was clear on the rules, it was time to actually play the game...

```
"Yuti!"
"Mmph."
"Whaaat? A three-pointer?!"
```

For Yuti, disciple to the Deity of Arrows, hitting a stationary target—putting the ball in the goal—was nothing short of child's play.

Any shot of hers would make it in the basket. For Yuti, the size of the court didn't matter.

However, when the others realized Yuti had an abnormal scoring ability, the

opposing team all rushed to mark her.

```
"I'll stop Yuti from moving!"
```

"Don't let her shoot! If she shoots, it'll be a basket for sure!"

Some of them were members of the Basketball Club, and under normal circumstances, they'd be able to block a player and prevent her from taking shots.

But that didn't work against Yuti.

```
"No way! Why?"
```

"We can't stop her!"

Yuti moved smoothly between the students who rushed to block her and easily slipped through the net they tried to draw around her.

A teammate passed to Yuti, but the opposing team was determined not to lose, and they rushed to prevent her from taking a shot.

```
"I won't let you shoot!"
```

"..."

"Huh?!"

The student who'd blocked Yuti looked shocked.

Because Yuti wasn't looking at the basket. Instead, she seemed to be spacing out.

What's more, Yuti threw the ball...right into open space!

Then...

"Wh-what?!"

"How did she do that?!"

...the ball Yuti threw landed perfectly in the open hand of a passing teammate, who hurriedly took the shot.

Using the techniques taught to her by the Deity of Arrows, as Yuti had already demonstrated to Yuuya and the others, she'd accurately predicted the precise timing of her teammate's positioning. Thus, she was able to perform a miracle

by throwing the ball precisely into their hand.

"How can we win against her...?"

One of the opposing team players sighed under their breath, and everyone in the room was inclined to agree.

Even after that, Yuti continued to play her heart out, and in the end, the score was dominated by her team.

* * *

"Yuti, you're amazing!"

"Hmm? Am I?"

After gym, Yuti was changing into her uniform in the locker room when Haruna approached her with sparkling eyes.

"Yeah! I mean, some of the kids on the opposing team are in the Basketball Club!"

"Basketball...club?"

"That's right! Our Basketball Club is pretty good, too, you know? I can't believe you almost single-handedly wiped the floor with them..."

"Negative. I wasn't the only one. Everyone had a chance to take a shot."

"Only because of your passes, Yuti!"

"Right!" someone said enthusiastically.

"Huh?"

One of the students who'd been listening to Yuti and Haruna's conversation had spoken up.

The student, with her short hair and somewhat boyish style, approached the two of them as she wiped away her sweat with a towel.

"Oh, whoops, we haven't been introduced yet. I'm Natsuki, your classmate. Nice to meet you!"

"Natsuki..."

"That's the name. You totally creamed me out there, but I'm actually a member of the basketball team."

"Basketball team...member...?"

"Yeah. Yuti, you really dominated out there. The only reason anyone managed a shot was because of your support. I mean, Yuti, your passes... It's like you could predict the others' movements or something..."

"Affirmative. I predicted them and then threw."

"That would be amazing, if true!"

Natsuki, taking what Yuti was saying as a joke, chuckled.

"Anyway, since you're so skilled, are you going to join the Basketball Club? Personally, I'd be more than happy to welcome you..."

"Question."

"Hmm? What is it?"

Yuti looked back and forth between Haruna and Natsuki, head to one side, expression solemn.

"What is a Basketball Club member?"

""Eh?""

"I understand basketball. But what is a member?"

They both froze, as if they hadn't expected her to say that.

However, Haruna quickly regained her composure and then cleared her throat.

"Um... Didn't you have school clubs where you came from, Yuti?"

"School clubs?"

"Oh, I guess you didn't."

It was clear just from Yuti's response.

"How odd, to come from somewhere without any school clubs..."

"Yeah. It's kind of a shame there wasn't any Basketball Club, when they had a

girl as talented as her."

Haruna and the other students around Natsuki who were listening all nodded in unison.

"Unclear. What is a school club?"

"Ah... School clubs... How to explain... It's like a group of people with the same goals who get together and work on something they want to do, like sports, after school..."

"Complex. Do I have to do club activities?"

"You don't have to, but...is there anything you want to do? Any special interests?"

"Affirmative."

Yuti nodded, then remembered she had no bow and arrow in this world.

"Bow and...ah..."

"Bow and arrow? Do you mean archery?"

Yuti lifted her head and looked at Natsuki with sudden excitement.

"Archery? Unknown. Does it involve...a bow?"

"W-well, yeah... Yuti, would you like to try archery?"

"Negative. I'm an archer."

"You're an...archer?!"

"What a surprise... In that case, you might want to check out the Archery Club. What would you like to do? There's no club practice today, so we can take you if you want?"

"Oh, I wanna come, too!"

Yuti nodded vigorously, pleased by their offer.

"Okay, then let's go to the Archery Club together after school!"

"Right. Still... Kinda sad she's not interested in basketball. And this archery thing is kinda a surprise..."

```
"Surprise? Why?"

"Why...? Well, I guess you're from overseas. Maybe archery isn't so unusual."

As Natsuki muttered to herself, Haruna asked Yuti a simple enough question.

"By the way, Yuti, where did you live before this?"

"In the forest."

""...Say what?""

"The forest."

""..."
```

Haruna and Natsuki asked again, but Yuti's answer didn't change.

Faced with Yuti's odd response, the two of them couldn't help exchanging a loaded glance.

```
"Th-the forest... Like, with trees?"
```

"In this modern day and age, it's not very common to live in a forest, right? Maybe she means she's from Aomori Prefecture. You know, the name has the character for 'forest' in it."

"Ah, maybe. But she said 'the forest,' not Aomori. And just look at her. She's obviously a foreigner, isn't she?"

```
"Hmm... She's fluent in Japanese, though..."

"R-right..."
```

Yuti was becoming more and more mysterious by the moment, and all they could do was shrug in confusion.

```
"Okay then, where do you live now?"
"Yuuya's house."
""Huh?""
"Yuuya's house."
"" ""
```

Once again, both girls...in fact, everyone in the room...fell silent.

Haruna was the first to recover, and she nervously asked for an explanation.

"Hey, hold on. You mean Yuuya, like, the Yuuya we know? There's a superpopular guy at our school with the same name..."

"Unknown. But he attends this school. High school."

"Wh-what's his last name, just for reference?"

"I think it's something like...Ten-Jo."

""

Again, silence.

Then...

"WHAAAT?!!!"

"Huh?!"

...the girls' locker room was filled with shouting.

"No way! No way, no way! Yuti, you live in the same house as Tenjou?!"

"Never mind that! What is your relationship to Tenjou? Tell us!"

"Alone with Tenjou... Ugh, I'm so jealous...!"

Yuti's eyes widened as she was bombarded with questions, one after another.

"Did I say something strange?"

"Strange...? No, no... I mean yes!"

"And you say you're living with Tenjou? What exactly does that mean?!"

"Unknown. I don't really know. But I'm in Yuuya's care."

"That doesn't make sense at all!"

The girls seemed intrigued by everything Yuti had to say.

Yuti tilted her head to one side, confused by their reaction.

"Question. Yuuya. Is he famous?"

"That's right, he's famous, at least at OUR school! A guy that hot?! It'd be

crazy if there WEREN'T tons of gossip going around about him!"

"Speaking of Tenjou, he showed off his incredible physical ability at the recent sports tournament, and it was super impressive when he single-handedly took out those delinquents who broke into our school that one time..."

"Ah yeah! That was amazing! He was tossing those jerks left and right!"

"Delinquents? ... I'm not informed. But fighting is no problem for Yuuya."

Yuti nodded understandingly, knowing all about Yuuya's fighting prowess.

"Also, this might just be a rumor, but everyone's saying he sent a bear flying when it tried to attack him."

"What?! Come on, there's no way that's true. Right, Yuti?"

"Denied. Yuuya could easily throw a bear."

"You've gotta be kidding, right?!"

Haruna and the others were even more shocked by what Yuti was saying now.

The students, eager to know more, started bombarding Yuti with more questions, making her late for the next class.

* * *

I've been fidgety all day, which isn't like me.

Why, you ask...?

"Man, that new girl at the junior high is apparently something else."

"Is...is that right?

"Yeah, she's some kind of foreigner. The whole school's talking about her."

...Right, I'm worried about Yuti.

Even now, during the break, with Ryou telling me the rumors about Yuti, I can't help but feel nervous.

She didn't make any big mistakes, right? She's okay, isn't she?

On top of that, I'm worrying about whether or not Ouma, who's back home

here on Earth, is being quiet.

We got things settled with Owen and the king and brought him home safely, but Ouma is a legendary dragon in the other world. He doesn't care about human customs and ways.

Also, Ouma, despite seeming disgruntled at first, soon perked up when he saw the food I made and the various Earth contraptions we have. Eventually, he decided to accept having been tamed by me.

When we got back to the other world and Ouma saw the sage's house, his reaction was one of the things that sticks in my mind the most.

"...Even if I threw the full force of my power at this house, it would be safe. He really was something else... His very existence was probably a violation of the laws of nature..."

A legendary dragon calling the sage a violation of the laws of nature...

That made me super curious about the relationship between Ouma and the sage.

"How did you and the sage meet?"

"It was a long time ago..."

Ouma trailed off, gazing into the distance.

"Back when I wasn't the calm, composed dragon I am now, and was in fact showing off my power, he suddenly appeared...and knocked me out with one blow. I still can't forget the shock I received at that time."

Wow, the sage really was something else.

"For the first time, the seed of fear sprouted in me, even though I had never once felt threatened by any other being before. I thought he was going to kill me, but he just lectured me instead... You, Yuuya, are the second person ever to lecture me."

```
"I—I see..."
```

I wasn't trying to lecture Ouma; I was just trying to word things in a way that would make him understand...

"That's how the relationship between the sage and I began, and we spent a long time together, but...he passed away. Leaving me behind."

As he spoke, Ouma's expression showed sadness and loneliness.

"So I was surprised when I smelled him on you, Yuuya. Though your auras are different, fundamentally you are most similar to him. And to think you inherited the sage's house, his weapons, his abilities..."

Ouma trailed off, eyes widening.

"It couldn't be... He predicted this much? To give me a new friend? Impossible... But this is *him* we're talking about... Damn..."

"Er, Ouma?"

Ouma's eyes were unfocused, and he was muttering under his breath. I had tried to get his attention, but he turned and headed straight into the sage's house. Wonder what that was all about.

Anyway, thanks to Ouma, I got to hear a little more about the sage. Seems like he really was something.

Still, thinking about it more in depth... I found those shoes in the sage's house made from a dragon god. Not Ouma, but still a dragon... Ouma's assessment of the sage didn't sound like a lie. Just who was he, anyway?

The whole day, I have been feeling like my stomach's churning, and as the day draws to a close, Kaede comes to find me, looking flustered.

"Yuuya!"

"Y-yeah?"

"Is it true you're living with that transfer student who's joined the junior high?"

Ah...

I've been so worried about things like Yuti accidentally discussing the other world, or getting into trouble by demonstrating her otherworldly powers, I completely forgot to even think about stuff like that.

So I'm struggling to think of a response when Ryou, too, gazes at me with

wide eyes.

"Yuuya, is what Kaede's saying true?"

"Huh?! No, the thing is..."

"What's going on?!"

Kaede gets up in my face, and I feel overwhelmed.

What should I say? In the first place, how can I explain my relationship with Yuti?

As I rack my brain for a way to clear things up, I suddenly notice a commotion in the hallway.

Ryou notices, too, and turns his gaze in that direction.

"Hmm? What on Earth is going on...?"

Just as Ryou looks out into the hallway, Shingo comes rushing in, all in a fluster.

"Y-Yuuya! The transfer student is calling for you!"

"Huh?!"

I grunt stupidly, surprised by this new development, and Yuti enters the classroom behind Shingo.

"Located. Here you are, Yuuya."

"Y-Yuti..."

When Yuti spots me, she comes right over to me without paying any heed to the gazes of the others watching.

"Question."

"Huh? Wh-what?"

Her gaze is so direct, my voice cracks a bit as I answer.

"Forbidden. Yuuya, you said I could not wield a bow. But in gym today, when I said I wanted to use a bow, Haruna said there is an Archery Club here. Request. I want to go now. May I?"

"I mean, you can't walk around carrying a bow, but if you want to join the Archery Club, I don't really have a problem with that."

"...!!! Really?!"

"Yeah, I wouldn't say so otherwise?"

If Yuti joins the Archery Club, she'll do well, no doubt.

Yuti actually smiles for once, and seeing that, I stiffen up.

"Gratitude. Thank you, Yuuya."

"Y-yeah, no problem."

"Departure. I am leaving now. I believe I will sweat a lot. Please prepare the bath. Bye-bye."

That said, Yuti turns and saunters off.

Anyway... Yuti just mentioned someone called Haruna. I wonder if that means she's been able to make friends already?

Relieved, I turn to Kaede and the others again.

"Er, so what were you talking about? Me and some transfer student?"

""Oh, don't play dumb now!""

...Yeeeah. That was never gonna work, was it?

We just chatted and used each other's names. No way is anyone going to believe we're strangers.

Realizing this, I try to explain, in as simple terms as possible.

"Um...so, that girl's name is Yuti. She's the daughter of a friend, and, um, they had some misfortune, so I agreed to take care of her. And now that friend is quite busy, so they asked me to take care of her for the foreseeable future, and, um..."

I have no idea if this is making any sense, but it's the only explanation I have. Of course, Yuti isn't really the daughter of the Deity of Arrows. But they seemed to have a father-daughter type of relationship, so I can use that as a cover story, right? No one will understand if I say she's someone's disciple, after all.



"But she's living with you, isn't she?"

"Well, um... It's all a bit sudden, and honestly it's not ideal, but she doesn't have anywhere else to go, so it's either my house or she sleeps outside..."

"G-guh!!! Living with Yuuya... I'm so jealous...!"

"Huh?"

Kaede looks like she wants to say something, but she ends up just grumbling instead, as if she can't find the words. I mean, I myself am aware of the issues that can arise when a young man and woman live alone, but...I can't discuss that, can I...?

In the end, the afternoon passes uncomfortably, and I can feel the stares of not just Kaede, but my other classmates as well.

* * *

Yuuya had given Yuti the okay to check out the Archery Club, so after school, Haruna and Natsuki guided her to the archery range.

There they found their homeroom teacher, Yanagi, wearing an archery uniform and instructing the students.

"Yanagi."

"Hmm? Haruna and Natsuki? What's the occasion? Oh..."

Yanagi turned, surprised, then noticed Yuti standing behind the others.

"Yuti... Is she interested in archery?"

"It seems so!"

"But listen, Teacher. Yuti played basketball in gym today, and she totally crushed it! I mean, no one could get past her, not even me!"

Yanagi's gentle eyes widened when Natsuki said that.

"Oh, really? Then don't you want her for the Basketball Club?"

"Yes, but it's her choice, ultimately. Right, Yuti?"

(())

"...Yuti?"

Haruna and Natsuki both nudged Yuti, but Yuti didn't seem to hear them. She just stared at the students who were shooting practice arrows.

Yanagi laughed.

"Oh, it seems like Yuti's fascinated by bows and arrows. What do you think? Would you like to try shooting?"

Yanagi handed Yuti a bow and arrow. Yuti seemed to come back to Earth, examining the bow and arrow in her hands.

"Okay, Yuti. Before you shoot, you have to make sure you're nice and loose and..." Yanagi immediately went to show Yuti how to hold them, but...

"No need."

"Eh?"

Yuti ignored Yanagi's advice and walked forward to where the other students were taking their shots.

The students were surprised by Yuti's sudden arrival, but Yuti didn't seem to care at all. She fixed her eyes on the far target and spoke to Yanagi behind her.

"Question. Should I aim for the middle of that target?"

"Er, yeah. I mean, that's the general idea. But it's not as easy as..."

Before Yanagi could finish, Yuti readied her bow and casually fired an arrow.

She shot the arrow in her usual manner, ignoring the rules of archery.

And so there could be only one result.

Yuti's arrow pierced the very center of the target, a sight that struck everyone dumb with shock.

But Yuti was unbothered. She notched another arrow and then shot again.

"H-hey, hold on, Yuti?!"

Yanagi, startled by Yuti's actions, cried out, but Yuti paid no heed.

The arrows Yuti shot hit the centers of the other targets one after another, splitting the shafts of the arrows that were already lodged in them.

But that wasn't enough for Yuti. She focused even harder, off in her own world, and shot arrows with abandon.

```
"Wow, amazing..."

"I can't believe she hit the center of the targets so accurately..."

"Sh-she's unreal...?"

"Hey, look! That wall in the back...!"

"What? No way!"
```

The students watching Yuti suddenly realized something alarming.

Yuti's arrows had started to go right through the targets now and were peppering the wall beyond.

Haruna and the others dashed over to her in a panic, worried about what would happen if she kept going.

```
"Y-Yuti! Yuti!"

"Stop, stop!"

"...Hah!"
```

Haruna's voice finally seemed to reach Yuti, who loosed one final arrow toward where the wall...used to stand.

Done, Yuti turned to the others with a look of excitement on her face.

```
"Satisfied now."
"..."
```

Everyone was so taken aback by the crazy abilities Yuti had demonstrated, they couldn't speak. Certainly no one was expecting her to have laid waste to the targets *and* the wall behind them.

Yuti quirked her head, surprised by their confusion. Then she picked up on some weird vibes in the air.

It was a strange feeling, one she could only sense because her nerves had been sharpened by such intense concentration moments before.

```
"This sensation...a Demon?"
```

Yuti sensed the strangeness... But when nothing happened, she decided not to worry about it for the time being.

More than that, Yuti was pleased with having been able to shoot arrows even at school.

Seeing Yuti nodding with satisfaction, Yanagi seemed to snap out of their shock, muttering under their breath.

"Th-those arrows were expensive..."

"Er, the arrows? What about the targets and the wall?"

"...Yes, those too..."

"...?"

Until now, Yuti had always made her own arrows and targets, so she had no concept of what Yanagi was concerned about.

* * *

"...Finally, the time has come."

In the pitch-blackness, glowing red eyes narrowed with glee.

"Thanks to that pig, I had some concerns, but...somehow, I managed to endure."

The red eyes looked upward.

"You're already done for. I'll just recover here a little longer, and then I'll break free..."

The red eyes melted away into the darkness.

CHAPTER 5

Demon Power

"Okay, from today on, we'll start training for real."
"Woof!"

"Oink."

Around a week's gone by since Yuti started school, and now that things have calmed down, I've decided to refocus on my training.

When Yuti appeared, her power made me realize how much strength I lacked, and I realized if I stayed at my current level, I wouldn't be able to relax in the other world.

Personally, I'm not seeking extraordinary power like Yuti's, but it seems like I, too, have been caught up in this battle between Deities and Demons.

"Sigh... I wish I could just enjoy the other world without all this strife... Guess that's impossible, though?"

"Woof!"

"Oink."

Sensing my despondence, Night and Akatsuki place their paws and hooves on my knees. So cute.

As soothing as their presence is, I suddenly have a thought.

"Huh? Wait, where's Ouma?"

To be frank, the real reason why I've decided to intensify my training is because of Ouma.

Master Rabbit appeared and taught me to kick, then I taught him magic...and

he split.

So I'm grateful to have such a strong presence near me; it's just...

"Answer. Ouma is asleep."

"Eh?"

I turn to see who's just spoken, and it's Yuti.

"What's up? I thought you were studying?"

Yuti might be a star in gym, but she struggles to keep up with her academic classes. She's been studying hard at home to catch up, even working from elementary school textbooks to learn the fundamentals.

But she seems to enjoy learning, and she's gaining more knowledge day by day.

I've always hated studying, but it was the only thing I ever did that felt like it paid off for the amount of effort I put in. So I always studied diligently...

Even though I was on a diet and doing muscle training all the time, I could never manage to lose any weight or gain any muscle. Not until I first leveled up.

Yuti responds to my question with a straight face.

"Training. I will be your sparring partner, Yuuya."

"Huh?"

"Non-peak condition. Since yesterday, I haven't been feeling good. I want to move my body."

"Shouldn't you be resting, in that case?!"

What part of feeling unwell makes her want to do strenuous exercise?

"Negative. I don't feel right unless I'm moving. I feel all...frustrated."

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that, but..."

"I am the disciple of the Deity of Arrows. I am more advanced than you. So I will make sure to watch over your growth."

"R-right... Well, I appreciate the sentiment, Yuti... And if you want to exercise, I won't stop you... But did you say Ouma's sleeping?"

"Yes. After lunch, he said he was sleepy and went to bed."

"Wow, he just does whatever he likes..."

Since Ouma came to live at my place, he's been very complimentary about the food I cook, sure, but at the same time, all he does is laze around and eat.

I'd like to take him out and show him Earth, of course, but it could lead to huge problems, so right now I need him to just hang tight.

So I can't really complain if Ouma does nothing but eat and loaf around. He's a legendary dragon, strong as anything, so I doubt he needs any training. As a result, there's absolutely nothing for him to do.

"Oh well, if he's asleep, he's asleep. So will you help me out, Yuti?"

"Affirmative. I already said I would. But I also want to practice. Even now, the feelings of frustration are growing stronger..."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

I get as far as saying that, but then...

"Ugh?!!!"

"Y-Yuti?!"

All of a sudden, an agonized look crosses Yuti's face, and she crumples to the ground.

I grab her in a panic, and her eyes open wide.

Her eyes... They're bright red.

"What?!"

"It took a while, but finally, I recovered. And now I have emerged!"

Another voice is coming from Yuti's mouth.

Seeing that Yuti has changed somehow, Night cuts between us and drags me safely away from her.

```
"Grrr..."
```

"Wh-what's wrong, Night?!"

```
"Oink! Oink, oink!"
```

Night and Akatsuki look worried, too, and I return my gaze to Yuti.

Slowly, she gets to her feet and turns her red eyes in my direction.

"Now, now. Don't glare like that. You two are bosom buddies, aren't you?"

"What are you talking about...? And who ARE you? You're not Yuti!"

It's Yuti's body, but there's something completely different inside. Both Night and Akatsuki have sensed it.

In response to my question, the THING in Yuti's body simply grins...

"Is this vessel really so important to you? In that case...I'll give it back!"

```
"...?!!!"
```

The next moment, a black mist is ejected from Yuti's body and slowly begins to take shape.

The black mist forms a shadow version of her, all black, in contrast to Yuti's usual white attire.

```
"Y-Yuti?!"
```

"No. I am a Demon. Well, a part of a whole Demon..."

In contrast to Yuti's white hair and eyes, the black mist form of Yuti has black hair and red eyes.

And with the black mist form...the Demon...removed from her body, Yuti suddenly seems to lose all strength and collapses to the ground.

```
"Yuti!"
```

"Hey! Don't ignore me. I'll get lonely here."

The Demon in the shape of Yuti grins at me, then conjures a bow and arrow from black mist and starts shooting at me.

```
"Gah?!"
```

"Woof!"

"It's...it's all right!"

The Demon turns out to be a poor shot, with none of Yuti's skills. The only way any of these shots are going to hit me is if I stay completely still.

The Demon looks at its own hands with bitterness.

"Tch. Already out with one hit. I will need to find the next host as soon as possible..."

"What do you mean, the next host?!"

I've already guessed this Demon is the same Demon that had apparently entered Yuti's body.

That's probably why it came out of her...

"Why did you emerge from Yuti's body now?"

"Hmm? Ah, well, it's obviously because she's used up... I have no further need of her, see?"

"Used up?"

"Right. She was pure and overflowing with negative emotion. But you people have ruined that. I waited until I'd recovered, but now it's time for me to find a different host."

The Demon laughs as it speaks, glowering at Yuti, then conjures another arrow and raises its aim toward her.

"Time to get rid of the loose end!"

"No! I won't let you do that!"

Instantly, I use my Equipment-changing Bangle to don my Bloodstained Ogre armor, draw my Omnisword, activate Infuse Magic, and move in between Yuti and the Demon.

I parry a blow from the Demon with the sword and then slice at the Demon myself.

However, it dodges my blow easily.

And yet... Akatsuki stands behind the Demon, activating his Holy Ground skill.

"Oink!"

"Ha! Even if I was inside an immature host, you're still not strong enough to deal with me, a Demon, a mass of pure evil, you dumb hog!"

```
"Oink?!"
```

"Woof!"

Surprisingly, Holy Ground doesn't work, and when Akatsuki freezes, stunned, the Demon fires an arrow right at him.

There's no way Akatsuki can dodge an arrow like that, and I try to rush forward, but Night gets there first, grabbing Akatsuki in his jaws and hauling him away from the line of fire.

```
"Woof."
```

"Oink. Oink..."

"Woof, woof."

Akatsuki, saved by a hair, grunts loudly at Night in thanks. Clearly despondent that his Holy Ground skill didn't work, Akatsuki hangs his head, and Night comforts him.

I never imagined Akatsuki's Holy Ground would fail... But based on what the Demon said, it seems there's some connection with the host.

Yuti, an immature host... Maybe Akatsuki would have been able to suppress the Demon's power if it had still been inside Yuti.

Does that mean there's no way to seal the Demon unless it's inside someone else's body?

While I rack my brain over it, the Demon glares at Yuti again.

"Tch. I wanted to quickly destroy this unusable vessel, but doing so would waste all my power. I suppose all I can do is make my escape."

"What? Do you seriously think I'm going to let you escape?"

"Come, now. Surely you don't think you can beat me?"

"Well..."

To be honest...I think I'll have a tough job.

I already used my Infuse Magic technique earlier, so catching the Demon by surprise is no longer an option.

Anyway, after being inside Yuti, the Demon probably has a pretty good idea of my abilities by now.

Taking my lack of response as an answer, the Demon grins.

"Hmph. Well then, I'm going to quickly slip out of here and look for a more compatible-seeming host."

"Wait!"

I can't just let this Demon escape.

I can't let it infect people and make them go wild like Yuti did...

I have to prevent that, at all costs...!

The moment I think that, I find myself yelling.

"Then use me!"

"Woof!"

"Oink?"

"...Interesting."

At my suggestion, the Demon grins a demonic grin.

"I was watching you from within Yuti... A disciple of the rabbit, aren't you? Yes, you seem pretty strong... The stronger the host, the better. Although, it doesn't really matter whether we're compatible or not..."

As the Demon considers me with its eyes, Night and Akatsuki shuffle and grunt, displeased by my suggestion. But it's not like I don't have a plan here.

My theory is: If this Demon gets affected by the host it inhabits, then I can make it inhabit me and then suppress it with Akatsuki's Holy Ground skill.

But the Demon seems to have guessed my intentions. Its grin widens.

"So you plan to have me possess you and then suppress me with your power, eh? But Yuti couldn't suppress me, remember? So..."

The Demon trails off, eyes sparkling with malice. Then it leaps into my body!

"...I'll make you regret your naive plans!"

"Guh?!"

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

Night and Akatsuki leap forward, trying to prevent the possession, but it's too late. The demon's already inside me.

I can feel the evil presence swirling around , eating me away from the inside and filling me with dark power.

* * *

"Fool! Offering up your own body?"

The Demonic power inside Yuuya grinned evilly.

"Trying to seal me away inside your body... Not a bad idea... But did you really think I wouldn't have taken preventative measures?"

Like the Demon said, it was recovering its energy inside Yuuya's body, taking measures to prevent the same failure as before from happening again.

"Hmm, yes, I am limited in here... But if I stain your heart black with my malice... You might actually die, you know?"

If the Demon succeeded in corrupting Yuuya's heart, then, coupled with its own Demonic power, it would be able to evade Akatsuki's Holy Ground and erase Yuuya's soul at the same time.

"No need to wait around. I think I'll stain your heart black with malice right now..."

Slavering in anticipation, the Demonic being inside Yuuya began to reach for his soul...

However...

"Huh? What...what is this?!"

The Demonic being screeched.

And the reason for that was...

"How can this be...? I've never seen a heart like this before... It's pure white...!

Not a single stain! What am I supposed to do with this?!"

The Demon was taken aback by the fact there wasn't even a spot of blackness on Yuuya's heart. As such, it could not force the stain to spread at all.

"No good... No good! I can't work with this!"

In order for the Demonic power to blacken a person's heart, there needed to be at least some malice already there for it to exploit.

This was because some level of negative emotion was needed as fuel for the darkening of a heart. But Yuuya, with his kind and gentle nature, had no negative emotions, and as such, there was no fuel for evil.

As a result, the Demon could not reach Yuuya's heart, which contained no dark elements whatsoever.

"It's not supposed to be like this... I have to get out of here, quickly...!"

The Demonic power tried desperately to break free, only to find everything around it had turned pure white like Yuuya's heart, and the way out was obscured from it.

"What ...? This can't be ...!"

The Demon hesitated, at a loss, then realized its powers were reaching their limit.

"Nothing I can do against this... Ha-ha... To think such a human exists..."

Inside Yuuya, the Demon was rendered powerless. All it could do was slump in defeat.

```
"...Huh?"
"Woof...?"
"Oink?"
```

The Demon just jumped into my body and spread some sort of evil energy... but it subsided in an instant, and before I knew it, it was gone.

I'd had Akatsuki keep Holy Ground on standby in case something happened, but...

"Did it...did it not need me after all?"

Precisely! I can't even believe humans like you exist! Pah! Curse you!

"Huh?!"

I'm hearing the voice of the Demon, but looking around, I can't see it?

Then, suddenly, I feel something like a blow INSIDE my body.

"Wh-what was that?"

Me, you fool! I'm in HERE!

"What, inside me?!"

That's right!

Oh yeah. I'm the one who invited the Demon into my body after all.

"Um...I'm kind of scared. Akatsuki, could you use your skill to, uh, exorcise me?"

No! How come I have to be erased from existence?

Well, nobody wants to be erased, do they? Although this is a Demon, not a body.

As I'm thinking this, the Demon releases a tortured wail.

Darn it...! I wanted to take you over, body and soul, but your heart was stainless! I can do nothing with it! If I'd known this was going to happen, I would have tried returning to that slumped woman over there!

```
"Right... Yuti!"
```

The Demon's words remind me of Yuti, and I dash over to her.

Yuti groans a little, opening her eyes.

"Nnm... Where am I?"

"In my garden. Are you okay?"

"... Affirmative. My body hurts a little. But I feel better than before."

Yuti sits up on the spot and looks down at her body curiously.

I quickly explain about what just happened with the Demon.

"I understand. That black mist is part of the Demonic power. I wanted to take revenge on the Demons. It sensed that and emerged from my body."

"I—I see..."

"Question. Is that power inside you now, Yuuya?"

"Er, yeah, pretty much."

My response makes Yuti's eyes widen, then her expression clouds over.

"Worried. Are you okay...?"

Yuti looks up at me anxiously.

I want to reassure her, but...

"Honestly, I don't know. Nothing's happening at the moment, and the Demon has been talking to me from inside my body, but it seems like it failed to take over. Did the Demon talk to you like this when it was inside your body, too?"

"Affirmative. I have been hearing that voice for a long time. Telling me to take revenge on humans, asking if it isn't a torture to me not to act..."

"Whoa..."

Hearing a voice in your ear saying all that kind of stuff... That could drive someone crazy.

"As a result...I couldn't ignore it. And I couldn't suppress my thirst for revenge."

"Well, it's pretty noisy. No wonder you couldn't just ignore it."

Who are you calling noisy?!

Er, you.

But Yuti doesn't seem able to hear the Demon's voice now. She looks solemn as she speaks again.

"Prediction. It's probably been inside me for a long time. That's why it took on my shape. Now it's inside you. Speaking to you."

"Right..."

The Demon was inside Yuti for a long while, so it was probably easy for it to assume her shape.

But the Demon looked exactly like Yuti... Just with differently colored hair and eyes. It was so...humanlike.

While I'm marveling over that, Ouma comes ambling into the garden, yawning.

"Yawn... Seems something strange is afoot, eh, Yuuya?"

"Ouma..."

Ever since Ouma started spending time at my house, he's started calling me by my name.

At first, he called me You, or Boy, so I suppose I feel quite moved by this development.

"Sniff, sniff... Before, the Demon odor was coming from Yuti, but now it's coming from you, Yuuya. What on Earth did you do?"

"Er..."

I fill in Ouma on what just happened as well, but he doesn't seem very interested, even though he's the one who asked. He just yawns a lot.

"Yawn... This Demon is a pain in the butt. Why don't we just destroy it?"

Eek! Is that...? Could it be...a legendary dragon?!

"Huh? Why?"

Then I realize the noisy Demon has been very quiet and meek while I've been

talking to Ouma.

So I find myself directly addressing the Demon inside me, and in quite a fluster, it responds.

Y-you scoundrel! Setting a legendary dragon on me? Is that not cowardly? And since when did legendary dragons actually exist?!

"Cowardly...? Well, I guess all I can say is yeah, he actually exists. Besides, I don't know what you're planning, Demon, but you can't do much while I've got Ouma in my corner, can you?"

Curse you! No one would think the legendary dragon actually exists!

Of course. That's what we thought at first, too.

While I'm arguing with the Demon, Ouma turns his back on us to go inside the house.

"This is a joke. I don't need this hassle. Human matters are of no concern to me."

"You don't even care...?"

"But if you cause any trouble in this house, Demon...I wouldn't even hesitate."

"Ouma..."

I didn't expect him to say that, so I can't help but feel moved, and Ouma quickly leaves, looking embarrassed.

Then, just before entering the house, Ouma seems to remember something, and he turns around to speak.

```
"Yuuya."
```

"Yes?"

"Don't let that Demon steal your heart."

"Huh?"

"If you are hoodwinked by the Demon...you will die."

"Whaaat?"

I'll DIE? I mean, I knew the Demon was bad news, but sheesh!

Despite my surprise, Ouma snorts with laughter.

"Still, you won't grow stronger unless you can learn to use it. I'll do what I can to help, as long as you keep the food coming."

With that said, Ouma disappears into the house.

"I can use it...? Wait, can I use the power of the Demon to my advantage...?"

Ha! You think you can use ME?

"Excuse me! Ouma! This Demon is acting up!"

All right, all right! Of course it's up to you, but it does seem there are some people who are able to harness my power.

Wow. This is shocking... The thought I could bend this Demon and its power to my will.

In any case, just mentioning Ouma's name makes it so docile... It's convenient, in a way.

He has the soul of a Demon himself... But no! With that pure-white heart...

I mean, I'm not sure what I'm capable of myself.

Ignoring the Demon as it continues to berate me, I address Yuti.

"Ouma says I might be able to harness the Demon power. Do you have any idea how?"

"Unknown. I know how to activate it but not how to master it. It goes out of control."

"Then can you just tell me how to activate it? I feel like it'd be good to know in case of an emergency..."

Because if the original host of this Demon power—the "main body"—attacks, I won't be able to fight it with my power alone. Therefore, by knowing just how to activate the Demon power, I might be able to take countermeasures against its threatening force, and if the Demon itself goes berserk, I may be able to control it with my own power then.

Lately, I've been learning a lot in addition to my usual muscle training and practicing magic and the skills I've learned from Master Rabbit. If I can control

the power of a Demon, too...

To be honest, no matter how much time I have, it's never enough.

Moreover, I'm wiped out today.

Yuti was supposed to accompany me in my training, but now that the power of the Demon has left her, I'm worried about potential aftereffects. I think we'll take it easy for today.

Just as we head to the house to join Ouma, something suddenly falls from the sky into my garden.

The sage set up a barrier in the sky to prevent any attacks, so anything that falls should be harmless to us, but...

...We freeze in shock, and eventually the dust and smoke clears, revealing a familiar face.

"Master Rabbit?!"

"Long time no see."

Yes, it's the very same Master Rabbit I haven't seen in quite a while.

Master Rabbit starts to approach us, but then he seems to sense something and moves farther away from me.

"Er, Master Rabbit?"

"... Answer. Why does your body give off the sign of the Demon?"

Struck by a gaze full of murderous intent, all I can do is tremble as Master Rabbit shifts his gaze to Yuti with a suspicious look.

"Hmm? Why is there a Demon presence in Yuuya, and the Demon presence in Yuti has disappeared?"

"Oh, that's because..."

Somehow, I manage to speak despite the intense pressure of Master Rabbit's scrutiny, and I explain what's happened.

Then...

"Ah...you are the stupidest person in the history of mankind. To offer yourself

up..."

Well, there's not much I can say to that.

In retrospect, I should have been much more prudent. I made a snap decision to offer myself up, so it can't be helped if Master Rabbit calls me an idiot. But I never thought he'd call me "the stupidest person in the history of mankind."

Master Rabbit stops glaring daggers at me and sighs.

"Don't try new things, one after another, when you haven't mastered even one power yet."

"I know, I know, you're totally right."

"Still... It is a surprise to find the Demon was unable to control you despite entering your body. This is good news. If you can master that power, it will strengthen you for sure. Just don't let it steal your heart."

"I-I'll be careful..."

I can't imagine what kind of situation would lead to me letting the Demon steal my heart, but I'd better be careful anyway.

Realizing all over again what a terrible being it is that's entered my body, I suddenly think of something.

"Now that I think about it...what brings you here?"

"Hmm? Ah... Yes, I did have business in the area. So I thought I'd swing by and see how things are going."

"Business?"

"Hmph... There's no need for you to worry about it. Just be diligent about your training, okay?"

"Understood..."

I don't actually understand, but it's not like I can say anything else.

Not like anything bad can happen when Master Rabbit's around anyway.

But just as I'm thinking that, Master Rabbit turns around.

"I'll be off, then."

He jumps into the air and, just like before, dashes through the sky, away to... who knows where.

* * *

"…"

After leaving Yuuya's house, the rabbit roamed the skies above the Weald for several days.

As he moved through the skies, he thought over the nugget of information that had led him to the Weald in the first place.

```
"The Deity of Fists..."
```

The Deity of Fists, now a former Deity, had fallen to Demonic influence and at this very moment was going on a rampage to kill as many Deities as possible.

In order to put a stop to it, the rabbit, himself the Deity of Kicks, was seeking the Deity of Fists for a duel.

And now it seemed the Deity of Fists was also searching for the rabbit and had received information he was in the Weald.

So the rabbit had spent days looking down on the vast land of the Weald from above, searching for the Deity of Fists.

After traveling the Weald for a while, the rabbit was suddenly assaulted by a deadly, murderous intent.

```
"...!"
```

Reacting to the murderous intent, the rabbit immediately delivered a strong and ferocious kick in its direction. Then he came to a sudden halt, changed direction in midair, and charged toward the source of the murderous intent at breakneck speed.

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Then...

"Gilbert..."

"Sup, Rabbit?"
```

There stood the Deity of Fists, Gilbert Fister, with a fearless smile on his face.

CHAPTER 6

Awakening

"...Hyah!"

After the Demon power entered my body, I began training to harness it, as suggested by Ouma and Master Rabbit.

Of course, I can't neglect the training I've been doing up until now, so I'm keeping up with that at the same time. But it's hard to improve quickly when juggling different disciplines. So far, I've shown no signs of getting this Demon power to activate.

"Hmph! I can't wield it! I'll never get stronger at this rate..."

In response to my grumbling, the Demon calls out to me in a teasing tone.

Heh. You can't do it, can you?

"But why?! If you tell me you're the one blocking me, I'll just go and tell Ouma..."

Don't threaten me with that legendary dragon over every little thing! You should use it sparingly! It's legendary, you know?

"Give me a break..."

Besides, it's not my fault you can't make any use of me. It's because your heart is too white and pure.

"Huh? What do you mean?"

What I just said.

Hmm, I don't really get it.

For now, I'll wrap up my Demon power training, and next I think I'll start

training with Yuti.

After taking a break, I call out to Yuti.

"I'm ready."

"Okay, okay. Any time is fine."

My training with Yuti is all about fighting while using Infuse Magic.

So...

"All right... Let's do it!"

I rush forward and, in the blink of an eye, take out my Absolute Spear and strike with it.

"Too easy!"

Yuti easily dodges the attack and unleashes a barrage of arrows at me.

"Are you kidding me...?!"

I desperately try to parry with my Absolute Spear, but each blow is so strong it's almost hard to believe these arrows are made of wood. I can't get away.

"Then how about this...?!"

"Hmm!"

I spin my Absolute Spear with one hand and block the arrows raining down from above while pointing my free hand toward the ground.

Immediately, I activate my magic while visualizing the eye of a typhoon in my mind.

The magic activates just as I'd envisioned it, and a storm rages around me.

Thanks to that, the arrows are thrown off course, and I take that opportunity to lunge at Yuti and throw my Absolute Spear at her.

"Hyah!"

"Guh!"

However, Yuti intercepts the attack with an arrow she wields skillfully in her hand, diverting the impact and thus deflecting the attack.

But my purpose with this move isn't to inflict damage with my Absolute Spear, but to create a momentary opening.

"Hyah!"

I conjure the Omnisword in my free hand and slash at Yuti, who's caught off guard.

"It's no use. That won't reach."

"What?!"

Yuti increases her speed even more and manages to deftly dodge my attack.

And this is why Yuti, disciple of the Deity of Arrows, is so far out of my league that I can barely even compete.

It's not like it's a fight to the death or anything, but my loss is a foregone conclusion. She's just too good.

After training for a while, I flop down to rest, and while I'm catching my breath, Yuti walks over.

"Yuuya."

"Yeah?"

"Unacceptable, Yuuya. You're not taking it seriously."

"I'm not? I mean, I think I was pretty serious..."

"All right. I concede. However, you haven't used the Demon power yet."

"Ah... But I can't actually seem to use it yet."

"Final objective. Let's try using both the Demon Power and the Infuse Magic you just used in our training. Then you will be able to wield the Demon Power."

"Hmm... I get it, in theory, but..."

I lie down on the ground and speak to the Demon inside me.

"What's the truth? Why can't I really use your power?"

Huh? Do you really want to use my power that much?

"Hmm, I guess. I mean, there are many more beings in this world than I ever

dreamed existed, and it'd be better to have as many ways as possible to protect myself from them. Besides, since you're inside me like this, don't you want to fight together?"

Ha. I told you, right? Your heart is the exact opposite of mine. How can I fight alongside someone like you? We're fundamentally incompatible.

"Hmm... Is that so? But I'm having a lot of fun talking to you like this, and I don't think we're really all that incompatible..."

...Hmph.

Hearing my words, the Demon falls silent, then speaks again.

...For me, life with you isn't so bad, either.

Since acquiring the Demon power and beginning the training needed in order to use it properly, we've been spending quite a lot of time together... And at some point, I realize, it's stopped trying to take over my soul like it was doing at the start.

On the contrary, the Demon seems interested in everything I do, and it seems to find everything about Earth both fascinating and enchanting.

Also, it's not just you I enjoy being with. I greatly enjoy this other world you call Earth as well. No wonder the legendary dragon has attached itself to you. The opportunity to experience a new world and new things...makes the strife between Deities and Demons seem like petty squabbling.

"I wish your power thought the same..."

Ah, but that's impossible. The power itself is like an embodiment of all the negative emotions of the world. I'm just the stuff that comes with the power. It's easy for me.

It's not easy for me, though!

I can't help but wish the actual power of this Demon was as easygoing as the personality part of it.

"Well, never mind. Shall we stop here for today and go back inside? I've finished all my daily training..."

"Affirmative. Recuperating is also important."

After catching my breath, I start heading back to the house with Yuti, Night, and Akatsuki, who'd been playing in the corner of the garden while we were training. However...

```
"Huh?!"

"Groooar!"

"Hmm? What's that?"
```

Night and Yuti suddenly stop and turn their sharp gazes toward the entrance to the garden.

```
Then...
```

"Huh?!"

A tremendous roar reverberates from somewhere near the house.

```
"What? What is it?"
```

"Unknown. But it's definitely a battle cry."

"Battle?!"

Even though this is the Weald, one of the evilest places in the other world, I've never heard such a roar before.

```
"But... What is it that's fighting?"
```

"Unknown. But it's too dangerous to stay here at this rate."

"Yuti?!"

Yuti, who doesn't know much about the effects of the sage's house, suddenly starts running toward the sound.

```
"Oh, we're coming, too!"
"Woof!"
```

"O-oink!"

Night's already raring to go, but I have to scoop up Akatsuki off the ground where he's lolling around lazily before I can follow Yuti.

Akatsuki doesn't have any combat abilities, so it might be better for him to stay home, but if the roaring creature is another being imbued with Demon power, I won't be able to do anything without Akatsuki...except face certain defeat.

With that in mind, I dash off after Yuti, and that's when I realize we've left Ouma at home.

"Oh, darn... I should have gone to get Ouma..."

But I trail off, realizing I probably wouldn't even be able to get Ouma to come.

After all, Ouma's currently sleeping back inside the Earth house, and since he's a dragon who sleeps for thousands of years, once he nods off, there's no waking him.

Even if I did wake him up, he probably wouldn't do anything, since he has zero interest in human affairs or in fighting against Deities and Demons.

I quickly cast my Infuse Magic and, reaching top speed, manage to catch up with Yuti.

"You're here."

"Yes, I'm here... But don't go running ahead like that. I'll worry about you."

"...Sorry."

Yuti's eyes widen slightly in response to my words, then she looks away and mutters her apology.

As we run through the Weald in silence, I suddenly notice something.

There aren't any monsters...?

Normally, even if I was running at top speed like this, monsters would attack me without hesitation. But for some reason, we haven't had a close encounter with a monster for a while now.

Yuti seems to have picked up on this as well and has a suspicious look on her face.

As I continue forward, feeling indescribably anxious, I finally arrive at the source of the roaring sound.

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And...

"Huh? And who the heck are you?"

"Y-Yuuya...?"

"Master Rabbit...?"
```

There stands a man with locs and a dark Demonic aura emanating from his body, holding up a battered Master Rabbit by his neck.

The situation seems so unreal that I sense even Yuti stiffening up in shock alongside me.

Then the man casually throws Master Rabbit to one side.

"Ha! I see, so this is your favorite little disciple, is it?"

"Stay...stay away from Yuuya...!"

"Huh? You have no right to issue orders to me, you weakling."

Then the man stomps on Master Rabbit.

"You jerk...!" Yuuya shouted angrily.

"No, stay back...!"

"But why?!"

When I try to dash over to help, Master Rabbit starts shouting in a strangled voice.

"Run away from this place, right now...!"

"R-run away...? There's no way I can do that! Yuti, I'm going to attack him! Back me up, okay?"

"...No."

"Huh?!"

I can't believe the word that just came out of Yuti's mouth as I turn to look at her in utter shock.

But Yuti, trembling, has her eyes fixed on the man.

It's not just Yuti; even Akatsuki and Night look afraid of him.

"What's wrong, everyone?!"

"Yuuya, don't you understand? He's dangerous. He can't be compared to my master or to the Deity of Kicks. He's a monster."

"A m-monster..."

As I hesitate, stunned by what Yuti's saying, the man looks down at me and laughs.

"Huh... Rabbit. When I imagined your disciple...I never imagined he was the kind of ignorant guy who couldn't even understand the difference in strength between us. Huh?"

"Guh?!"

"Damn you...!"

I can't stand seeing the man stomp tauntingly on Master Rabbit. Just as I'm about to attack him, he turns his cold eyes on me.

"You...shut up."

"..."

I can't help but grasp the bloodlust in those words.

The difference in power between me and the man in front of me...

The murderous intent coming toward me has me frozen, shaking.

Ah, this sucks. This guy's a real pain in the butt. Even among us Demons, he's one guy we can't handle. I guess we're out of luck.

"Huh? What do you mean ...?"

It means he's a Demon wielder on a completely different level from Yuti. He's some kind of monster.

But even the words of the Demon speaking from inside me seem far and distant to me.

While I stand there, too afraid to move, the man seems to lose interest in me and looks down at Master Rabbit instead.

"Oh, it's such a shame. I have to kill you in front of your little disciple, who

you invested so much in."

"Gah..."

"Although... I thought I'd enjoy it more. It's kind of a letdown, if I'm honest. Huh?!"

"Gah...!"

The man removes his foot from Master Rabbit's head and then kicks him up in the air.

"What do you think? How's my kicking, from the perspective of the Deity of Kicks, eh? It's effective, right? Huh?"

He grabs Master Rabbit's ears as he lands, forcing him to stand up, and with a leering grin, he mocks him.

Please, stop...

"Well, don't worry. After I kill you, I'll dispose of the useless spares, too. Aren't I such a good guy? I clean up after myself, not leaving even a single shred of garbage behind. After I've had my fun, I'll make sure to leave this place spickand-span."

"Stop..."

"Listen here. I'm telling you, you're out of options, you know?"

The man stomps on Master Rabbit over and over.

Please, stop...

Why can't I move?

"Ah, I've come up with a good idea. What if I kick you to death, Master Rabbit? Then I can inherit the title of Deity of Kicks. Huh? I must be a genius, right? Huh?"

"Ugh..."

"Hey, I'm talkin' to you here!"

The man relentlessly kicks Master Rabbit again and again.

It must be extremely humiliating for Master Rabbit, who holds the title of

Deity of Kicks.

"It's boring if you don't react. Okay, I think I'll just kill you now."

The man makes this smooth declaration, turning to us.

"Hey, make sure you're watching! Don't want to miss seeing me kick the Deity of Kicks to death. Don't wanna miss the moment when a new Deity of Kicks is born!"

Swinging his leg vigorously, the man stomps down without hesitation.

For that brief moment, everything seems to go slow motion, like a video played on half speed.

Stop it, stop it, stop it.

Move, move! Why can't I move?

Why can't I move, even though Master Rabbit is being attacked?

And who the heck is this man?

Kicking Master Rabbit to a pulp...

He won't get away with this.

* * *

While Master Rabbit was being kicked to death by the Deity of Fists, the Demon inside Yuuya was taking it easy.

Seriously, though, bad luck. Unlike that Yuti girl, this fellow is totally compatible with Demonic power. And being a Deity to begin with means he's already got skills.

The Demon rolled around inside Yuuya, practically yawning.

How annoying. Things were getting fun, but I guess my life here is over. If Yuuya is killed, I'll have to go looking for a new host again. What a pain.

The Demon flopped down.

...No... That would be too boring, said the Demon power inside Yuuya.

Though a Demon, and apparently totally incompatible with the young man, it

had still managed to form a bond of sorts with Yuuya, who chatted with it so indulgently.

So this new feeling growing inside the demon...where before it had been only pure evil...it felt kind of good.

It would spoil all the fun to leave him now... With him as my partner, I could...

Just as the Demon was murmuring listlessly to itself...

Suddenly, Yuuya's insides, previously pure and white, turned black at an alarming speed.

Wh-what was that?!

The blackness even swallowed the lolling Demon power.

Whoa?! Wh-what's going on? Something's awakening!

The Demon was taken aback by the sensation, something it had never felt before... But then it realized the current state of Yuuya's heart.

Hey, hey... I've never seen anything like this before, not even in Yuti, or anyone. What's with this pitch-black heart...?

The Demon power grinned over the darkness, which was even trying to encroach on it.

It's okay, Yuuya. Normally, I would have used this opportunity to take control of you here, but this time I will lend you my power so you can use it to your aid. However...

The red eyes of the demon glowed menacingly.

If you lose, I'll see you suffer.

* * *

"Take that, Rabbit!"

The Deity of Fists stomped with all his might.

He was the Deity of Fists, so kicking wasn't exactly his forte, but it was clear he still had a huge amount of attack power. Even Yuti, Night, and Akatsuki were rendered motionless by the power of the Deity of Fists, and all present clearly believed it was all over for the rabbit.

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But...

"Huh?"

"..."

"Huh?! Y-Yuuya?!"

"Hmm...?"
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...before anyone knew what was happening, Yuuya had stepped between the rabbit and the Deity of Fists and stopped the kick with one hand.

What's more, Yuuya's body seemed to be overflowing with a Demonic aura that rivaled that of the Deity of Fists.

Yuti and the others reacted with surprise, while the Deity of Fists scowled.

"Hey, you...you're insignificant! Whose permission did you get to touch me? Eh?!"

He then used his free leg to kick Yuuya, who was still gripping his other foot.

However, Yuuya quickly released the Deity of Fists's foot and dodged the attack.

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"What?!"
"..."
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Then Yuuya turned his back on the Deity of Fists and scooped up the rabbit in his arms, like the Deity of Fists no longer even existed.

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"H-hey... You bastard... What are you doing...?"

"..."

"What are you doing...? Are you listening to meeeee?!!!"
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Pride wounded, the Deity of Fists raised his fist and bellowed, furious at being ignored.

In the blink of an eye, that fist exceeded the speed of sound, giving off waves of impact and blowing away the surrounding trees and ground as it shot toward

Yuuya.

However...

"Wh-what?!"

Yuuya stared emotionlessly at the attack as he dodged it with ease.

"What's going on...? What happened?! You bastard, have you been hiding your abilities until now?! Huh?!"

"...It's amazing... Overflowing with power... Like he can destroy everything in this world." Yuti muttered in astonishment.

The Deity of Fists couldn't hide his anger at Yuuya's dismissive attitude, but that anger soon gave way to a devilish grin.

"Ha-ha-ha! Well, good! You'll be a lot more fun than that rabbit!"

"…"

"...I don't know how long you'll be able to keep up that sullen attitude, but I guarantee you, you won't be disappointed!"

The Deity of Fists made his hands into beastlike claws and raked the air with them.

"Devour him, Jaws!"

Then fangs of air attacked Yuuya, as if to eat him alive.

"Yuuya!"

Yuti couldn't help but scream as Yuuya made no move to dodge, even in the face of such an attack.

"Like this...?" Yuuya asked.

"Huh?"

Then Yuuya reproduced the exact same move as the Deity of Fists.

Fangs of air sprang from Yuuya's hands and clashed violently with the fangs of the Deity of Fists.

However, Yuuya's fangs were larger and more oppressive, so the Deity of Fists's fangs were easily swallowed.

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"Wh-what the heck?!"
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The Deity of Fists rolled and dodged the attack, and in the spot where he'd been standing, the trees and grass were now gone, as if they'd been vaporized by the air wave.

"Th-this is crazy... Well then, how about this?!"

The Deity of Fists gave up keeping his distance, moved into close range—his sweet spot—and immediately went on the offensive.

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"Sky Breaker!!!"
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It was a profound technique, the special technique of the Deity of Fists, which was carried out from extremely close range, boasting the smallest movement but the most devastating power.

What's more, although normally it would be enough for anyone to perform such an ultra-high-powered technique in just one blow, the Deity of Fists was different in that he was able to deliver a whole series of deadly blows.

A hit from this technique could damage a person internally as well as externally, leaving body parts scattered everywhere around.

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However...
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"Like this...?"

"Huh?"

Yuuya imitated the secret technique of the Deity of Fists and parried each one of his blows.

As a result...

"Gaaaaah!!! Agh! My arrrrrm!!!"

...in a fistfight, his sacred domain, the Deity of Fists was defeated.

The arms of the Deity of Fists snapped clean off, leaving nothing behind.

"My arms! Oh, my arms! Ohhh! Whyyy?"

"Don't yowl like that."

"Yeek!"

For the first time since his arrival in the Weald, the Deity of Fists caught a whiff of his own death.

The Deity of Fists focused on Yuuya properly for the first time... The young man's body emitted a wavering black aura, and his eyes blazed red.

Yuuya remained expressionless as the Deity of Fists fell pathetically to the ground, having lost both his arms—his pride and his greatest weapons.

"What's wrong? Don't you want to fight?" Yuuya asked.

"N-no..."

"No? Well, that just won't do."

Yuuya slowly took out a bottle of Herb of Complete Healing Juice from the Item Box and casually sprinkled it on the Deity of Fists.

Immediately, the Deity of Fists's lost arms regenerated.

"Huh? Oh, my arms!"

"What are you doing?"

"Oh? Gah..."



Arms healed, the Deity of Fists was about to rally his strength, but Yuuya attacked him again, his expression merciless.

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"Gah! You... You jerk...!"
"..."
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"Wh-what's with those eyes...? Don't look down on me with those eyes!"

The Deity of Fists began unleashing his techniques on Yuuya one after another, but Yuuya mirrored them all in an instant, with more than double the power.

Now the Deity of Fists had a revelation.

Having his arms healed turned out to be the beginning of hell.

No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't land even a scratch on Yuuya.

All he could do was roll around pathetically.

His arms were blown off, his legs were torn off, and a hole was bored through his stomach. But Yuuya continued to use items to heal him and force him to fight on.

Yuuya simply continued to inflict pain on the Deity of Fists.

What the heck? How could this be happening...?!

"N-no more... Please stop...!"

"No more? Stop? Isn't this what you wanted? A fight against a strong opponent?"

It was true that the Deity of Fists, in his desire for a fight against a strong opponent, had acquired the power of a Demon and embarked upon a Deityhunting quest.

But what the Deity of Fists was enduring now was not really a fight against a strong opponent.

It was a one-sided beatdown.

And yet Yuuya continued attacking. But Yuti, finally recovered from the shock of the Deity of Fists's attack and the dramatic change in Yuuya, rushed to stop

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him.
  "No. Yuuya."
  "Move aside."
  "I won't. At this rate...you won't be able to make it back."
  "Won't be able to make it back? That's a strange thing to say. I'm just giving
this guy what he wanted."
  "Denied. Return to the Yuuya we know. Akatsuki!"
  "Oink!"
  In response to Yuti's call, Akatsuki immediately activated his Holy Ground skill,
as if he'd just been waiting for someone to prompt him.
 Yuuya paused and frowned.
  "Huh! This is..."
  "Calm down. Return to the gentle and kind Yuuya we know."
  "...Kind?"
 With that one word, Yuuya became expressionless again.
  "What's the point of kindness? It doesn't help anything. It can't save anything.
We don't need that kind of thing."
  "Denied. It's you we don't need. Give Yuuya back his body."
  "I am Yuuya."
  "No, you're not."
  "...I see. If you're going to get in my way, I'll eliminate you, too. People
become weak when they have someone to protect. Thus, it's better not to have
anyone to protect in the first place."
  "Huh?!"
 Yuti instinctively shrank as Yuuya slowly stretched out his hand...
  "...?"
  "Ah..."
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Suddenly, Yuuya stopped.

"What...?"

The faint memory that remained within Yuuya was holding on.

Observing himself coldly, cruelly, he spat out words of vitriol.

"Though you yourself wanted this to happen...now you're backing out?"

"...Well now, this is all rather tiresome, isn't it?"

"O-Ouma!"

Ouma, who everyone thought was back home sleeping, appeared and slowly approached Yuuya, yawning widely.

Yuti rushed toward the dragon.

"Request. Please help. Yuuya won't come back."

"Oh, all right."

Rolling his eyes at Yuti's request, Ouma turned his gaze toward Yuuya.

"Usually, I wouldn't deign to intervene in a matter like this."

"Ouma...?"

"Tsk, what a tiresome master he really is. Can't he even handle a little thing like wielding Demon power?"

But even as he spoke, Ouma bit back a wry smile.

"Still... This sort of thing is typical for Yuuya. Being too kind can be its own issue. Look sharp, Akatsuki!"

"Oink?"

Ouma threw something at Akatsuki, who was cowering on the ground, devastated about not being able to help Yuuya.

Akatsuki caught the thing in his mouth and swallowed it without thinking.

"O-oink?!"

"Do not worry. It's the same medicine I took."

"The medicine YOU took, Ouma?"

"What, you don't remember? If I recall correctly, it was a Size-Changing Pill, was it not?"

"Wh-why did you give him that?"

In response to Yuti's reasonable question, Ouma grinned.

"So that he can grow big, obviously."

"Huh?"

"Come, Akatsuki! Grow nice and big, then use that skill of yours!"

"Oink?!"

Akatsuki, despite being fairly confused, began to grow larger just as Ouma urged him to.

Akatsuki's body grew beyond all prediction, his fur swallowing up the trees all around and everyone present.

"Wh-what the ...?!"

The encroaching fur covered Yuuya, too.

Akatsuki had grown into a beast of great size, just as Ouma had been when they first encountered him.

In that instant, Akatsuki activated his Holy Ground skill.

"Oooink!!!"

Akatsuki's Holy Ground spread across the entirety of the Weald, filling it with a soft light.

Then...

"S-so fluffy..."

...the black aura around Yuuya disappeared, and he beamed happily, completely enveloped in Akatsuki's fur.

Yuti blinked, shocked to see Yuuya back to normal, when she'd been convinced that it was a hopeless cause—that even Akatsuki's Holy Ground skill could not save the day.

"Shock, How?"

"It's simple. As Akatsuki's body became larger, the effectiveness of his skill also increased."

Ouma chuckled and called out to the now massive Akatsuki.

"Hey, Akatsuki. Enough is enough. Go back to normal."

"Oink? Oink!"

Akatsuki's amplified snorting sounds faded as his body grew smaller and smaller.

Yuuya, gazing at Akatsuki as he shrank with a sort of regret, suddenly blinked and looked around him.

"Wait, what? What happened to me? And why was Akatsuki so big just now?"

"Yuuya... I'm so glad."

"Say what?"

Yuuya blinked blankly at Yuti as she approached him, smiling wide.

Then, remembering something, he looked around again in a panic.

"W-wait, what about Master Rabbit?"

"Oh, I'm fine."

"Master Rabbit...!"

The rabbit, who'd been in a sorry state up until then, responded to Yuuya's cry while looking none the worse for wear.

"What? Master Rabbit... What happened to your wounds?"

"Standing right next to that giant piggy, I was also able to benefit from the effects of its skill."

"Oh... I'm so glad... Although it seems a bit too convenient..."

"Well, I'll explain it all later. More importantly... What's with that dragon? Where did it spring from?!"

"Huh? You mean Ouma? Oh, right, you two haven't met yet..."

When Master Rabbit heard about how Yuuya tamed Ouma, he clutched his

ears.

"What, taming a legendary dragon...? Can such a being even be tamed? He is literally a transcendent beast of this world, living centuries before we were even born..."

"Well... I mean, yeah? I'm not sure how it happened myself..."

"...Hmph. You're very different from the person you were before."

"Huh?"

"You worried Yuti and Akatsuki. You should apologize."

"Y-yes, sir..."

Yuuya, with no memory of the time he spent under the Demonic influence, could only respond meekly.

"More importantly, where did the Deity of Fists disappear to?"

"Huh? Oh, right! Him...!"

Suddenly recalling the existence of the Deity of Fists, the cause of all the commotion, Yuuya looked around, but he was nowhere in sight.

"...Apparently, Akatsuki's skill from earlier was able to heal his wounds."

"Oink..."

Akatsuki, realizing it was his fault the Deity of Fists had managed to escape, immediately became despondent.

Even easygoing Akatsuki didn't want to let someone like the Deity of Fists escape.

The rabbit put a comforting paw on Akatsuki's head.

"Don't get so depressed. There's nothing we can do about it. And we might not have been able to survive without your skill."

"Oink..."

Akatsuki nodded.

However, the fact remained that the Deity of Fists had managed to escape, and the atmosphere among Yuuya and the others became dark and somber.

"...Hmm? Huh? Where's Ouma?"

"Huh?"

Realizing Ouma hadn't spoken in a while, Yuuya looked around for him, but he was nowhere in sight.

"Prediction. He's probably gone home. I think he must be sleeping again."

"S-sleeping..."

"Certain. He's not that interested."

"Not that interested...? When we were fighting for our lives?"

"Sorry about Ouma..."

Not wanting to stay any longer, Yuuya started for home, apologizing for Ouma's attitude as he went.

* * *

"Ugh! Huff! Huff!"

While Yuuya and the others were returned home, the Deity of Fists, wounds miraculously healed thanks to Akatsuki's skill, was desperately running through the Weald.

"Damn it! Curses! Rats!"

His mind was filled with thoughts of Yuuya crushing him in battle.

Until then, the Deity of Fists had never known defeat. He was incredibly talented. He was a genius who absorbed all kinds of techniques.

For this reason, he succeeded as a disciple of the previous Deity of Fists and usurped the position within a year. From then on, he became even more greedy for power.

His strength also led to his arrogance, and before he knew it, he was not only looking for more strength, but also looking for someone to use his newly acquired skills against.

However, there were not many who could match the techniques of the

overwhelmingly powerful Deity of Fists.

He could defeat anyone if he had a mind to.

So to the Deity of Fists, other life-forms were insignificant.

But the all-powerful Deity of Fists had been defeated soundly.

Even though he used all the techniques he'd acquired so far, and the Demon power, he could not win.

In fact, Yuuya had done what the Deity of Fists always did...steal others' techniques and use them against them to break their morale.

And the result of that battle was a foregone conclusion.

For the Deity of Fists, other people were nothing more than toys on which to test his skills.

But Yuuya treated the Deity of Fists with solemn focus.

No emotion at all, dealing with him almost casually.

Being looked at like that shredded the Deity of Fists's pride—which was already in tatters.

When he reached a place where Yuuya and the others could no longer catch up to him, the Deity of Fists paused to catch his ragged breath.

"They won't get away with this... Making a fool of me... I'll show them all hell...!"

The Deity of Fists vowed to take revenge not only on Yuuya, but on the others, then tried to move from the spot with unsteady steps.

"Next time... Next time...!"

"Next time what? Don't talk nonsense."

"Whoa! Who's there?!"

The Deity of Fists whirled, panicking.

Before, he'd have been shocked to find that anyone could sneak up on the likes of him. But now, he didn't have the self-confidence to doubt it.

The owner of the voice came into view as the Deity of Fists stood slumped.

"You were there earlier, too..."

It was Ouma, whom everyone thought had gone back home to bed.

Filled with anxiety at the sight of the small dragon, the Deity of Fists raised his voice.

"What do you want?!"

But Ouma didn't seem bothered at all, approaching the Deity of Fists in his diminutive form.

"You said something strange just now."

"Huh? What? What did I say?"

"'Next time. Next time...'"

"Huh? So what? Next time, next time! This wasn't a loss! This is just me retreating! Next time, I'll win for sure! And I'll show them all hell. Got that?!"

"I see, I see..."

Ouma, seemingly amused by what the Deity of Fists had just said, laughed.

"You've got some nerve. You plan to pick another fight with my friends? You think I'm just going to let you go free after you've said that?"

"Huh? You're their friend? What can a puny dragon like you do...?"

In the blink of an eye, Ouma's body returned to its original size.

"H-huh?"

Before the giant dragon that suddenly appeared, the Deity of Fists fell backward onto the ground.

"Just a puny dragon, am I? I am a dragon who has lived since the dawn of creation, you know?"

"The...the heck? The dawn of creation... A legendary dragon... But those are just fairy tales!"

When the Deity of Fists looked up at him in shock, Ouma brought his face closer and opened his mouth wide.

"There is no next time for you. This is where it ends."

"Wh-whoa..."

But those were his final words.

Ouma chewed several times, then swallowed in a big gulp.

Then he grimaced.

"What an awful taste. Since I started eating Yuuya's food, my palate has grown considerably. I'm practically a gourmand now."

Muttering, Ouma returned to his smaller size and headed back toward Yuuya and the others as if nothing had happened.

"Well, I worked hard today, so I think I'll ask Yuuya to make some delicious food for me. That's right...something like a hamburg steak might be good."

With Ouma's departure, there was peace and quiet in the Weald once more.

* * *

"...What's the meaning of this?" One of the three Demons who had gathered at the World's Landfill muttered in shock.

"Crazy... The Deity of Fists... I can no longer sense his presence, nor the presence of the Demon power I gave him?!"

The one speaking in flustered tones was the Demon who had given power to the Deity of Fists.

"There's something strange on my end, too. The connection with the power I gave to the disciple of the Deity of Arrows has been severed."

In response to the flustered Demon, another Demon, one who was normally more laid-back, chimed in with confusion.

"That's strange... It wouldn't be so odd if the disciple of the Deity of Arrows died in the wild somewhere, but even so, the Demon power presence wouldn't necessarily disappear. And either way, the remarkable Deity of Fists would not just disappear..."

"That's right. As far as the Deity of Fists is concerned, we'd usually only need to monitor him from the shadows. I was thinking of going directly to guide him,

but..."

The first Demon responded to the second one.

"But if that's the case, then so what? Doesn't that mean he's no longer a hassle for us?"

"Well, if you think about it in simplistic terms, that's probably true, but under the current situation, we can't be so optimistic."

"Oh? Why?"

"It means there's someone out there who can stand against our power. It's too dangerous to leave that someone unchecked."

"You mean a Deity?"

"No, someone different, I think. Most of the Deities either fell to us or were killed by the hand of the Deity of Fists. There are very few Deities left to resist us. Besides, the only Deity who could stand against the Deity of Fists and who is also compatible with our power would be the Deity of Swords, said to be the strongest among all Deities. Even then, he would not fare well."

The Demon continued gloomily. "Therefore, the one who killed the Deity of Fists cannot just be left alone. Even if it does turn out to be the Deity of Swords, he would still be a threat to us."

"Then what should we do? Kill him?"

"Of course. We'll have to. However..."

"Oh, right."

The commanding-sounding Demon nodded in response to the somber-sounding Demon.

"It's about time we start a war against the remaining Deities."

"Ooh, really? You're not just saying that? Yay!"

The Demon laughed, unable to contain their excitement. Then they asked something else.

"When?! When are we going to kill them?! How many are we going to kill?! All of them?!"

"Calm down. Of course, we'll kill as many as we can. But if they do happen to surrender...we'll take them in."

"Huh? Why?"

"To keep as slaves, of course!"

"Slaves?!"

"Right. We, who have been relegated as losers, will take over the world... To do that, we must properly manage those who pose a threat."

"Hmm... Is that right?"

"It is indeed."

The simple-sounding Demon seemed to lose their enthusiasm, but they quickly regained their composure.

"Okay then, can I be the first to launch the attack?"

"All right. The others probably won't mind."

"Yeah!!!"

"...That being said, if we are going to wage war against the Deities, we can't just leave the one who killed the Deity of Fists unchecked."

"That's right. Well...there are many Deities who have surrendered to us. They even exceed the number of Deities who are still against us. I don't think we'll lose."

As they spoke, the Demon glared at the sky, visualizing the unknown individual who'd defeated the Deity of Fists.

"I don't know where or who they are, but...they can't run from us for long."

Then the three Demons left the scene.

Epilogue

While Yuuya and the others were fighting against the Deity of Fists, Lexia was visiting the neighboring country of Regal on official business.

The Kingdom of Regal and the Kingdom of Arselia had a long-standing friendship, and Lexia, a member of the royal family and popular among the people, had been appointed as their ambassador.

Normally, Owen would be there as her bodyguard, but with Luna as her new bodyguard, Owen was able to stay behind and protect King Arnold.

The two of them arrived safely at the capital of Regal and were immediately guided to a prestigious reception room, where they had a meeting with Royle, the chancellor, and Orgis, the king.

"My, Lexia... You are as beautiful as ever."

"Oh, thank you."

Luna was watching from several steps back as Lexia smiled at the compliments of Royle and Orgis.

Pfft. Sweet-talkers, the both of them... What's with these guys?

Luna looked at Lexia with a skeptical expression on her face, but the princess was smiling and apparently enjoying the friendly conversation.

Ever since she was appointed as Lexia's bodyguard, Luna had learned the real Lexia was not this ladylike.

Still, if she couldn't switch between public and private modes like that, she might not be effective as a member of the royal family...

As she observed Lexia and the others' conversation, Orgis spoke up as if he had just remembered something.

"Oh, now that I think about it... I heard there was a little problem in the Kingdom of Arselia..."

"What might that be?"

"I mean... It's just a rumor, but it was said that the firstborn prince, Prince Reigar, attempted an assassination and coup..."

As Orgis spoke, his eyes showed that he believed the rumors to be true.

Tsk... Tricky, these royals. It's like they're trying to find out our secrets. Even though our countries are friendly, if we show any weakness, they'll crush us... We'd better watch out. These guys could be worse than the Guild of Darkness...

Luna was right. The Kingdom of Regal and the Kingdom of Arselia had a friendly relationship, but there were still many issues that arose because they were neighboring countries. Like, for instance, territorial disputes.

Therefore, if Arselia showed even the slightest vulnerability, it could be exploited, and they could be put at a disadvantage.

The assassination attempt by the firstborn prince has been suppressed on the surface by the king's decree of silence, but rumors will leak. Plus, the king and the first prince have now reconciled. However, there is a possibility that other countries will try to use the first prince's motivations and encourage him to rebel. And there's no guarantee the Kingdom of Regal isn't one of those countries. We cannot let our guard down.

While Luna was quietly analyzing the situation, Lexia calmly smiled.

"Oh, you know happenings in our land very well, don't you?"

"Huh?!"

"...Indeed?"

Luna's eyes widened in surprise as Lexia addressed the issue head-on, not trying to hide anything at all.

Lexia, what are you thinking? Why would you go out of your way to show your opponent such a clear weakness of ours...?

Lexia continued nonchalantly as Luna watched nervously.

"However, my brother... Prince Reigar and His Majesty the King have completely reconciled. I don't think His Highness will rebel anymore."

"However, the fact remains that he rebelled. Doesn't that mean he was dissatisfied with the king of Arselia?"

"It's a family affair. Just a little father-son quarrel."

"Do you really consider an assassination attempt on the king a father-son quarrel?"

"Oh my, I wouldn't call it an assassination attempt, really. His Majesty is alive, and the prince is well, too, right? Besides, because of all this bickering, the bond between the two of them is stronger than ever."

Lexia was completely calm, and Royle looked dumbfounded, but Orgis's serious expression broke, and he laughed out loud.

"Ha-ha! You must be an incredible girl to think so positively!"

"I'm glad that you think so."

"All right, I'm convinced. I was thinking that if you showed even the slightest weakness, I'd squeeze you for all I could get... I didn't think you'd be so honest, let alone reframe it as a strength instead!"

Orgis laughed and looked at Lexia again.

"Now then, it's about time. There's one more thing I'm curious about, so I'd like to ask you about that as well."

"And what might that be?"

"Well... In the Kingdom of Arselia, there is a valley where the legendary dragon is said to sleep."

"Yes."

"They say the legendary dragon has awakened...is that true?"

""...?!""

Lexia and Luna still hadn't heard this piece of information.

"So it seems you do not know, either..."

"Eh, well. Is that story even true? I mean, a legendary dragon... That's the stuff of fairy tales, isn't it?"

"Well, most people would think so, but..."

"Lexia, didn't you feel a massive tremor on your way here? It felt like the earth was shaking..."

"Oh, come to think of it..."

Lexia, who had already left the royal capital by the time the roar shook the valley, remembered feeling a tremor on the way. It was around the time when the legendary dragon Ouma awoke.

The tremor immediately alerted the coachman, their escort knights, and Luna, but nothing happened after that, so they concluded it wasn't anything of import.

"The people say the rumbling of the earth was the roar of a legendary dragon."

"Oh, really?! But there is a huge distance between the country of Regal and the valley where the fairy tale dragon is said to be located..."

"Well, since it's a legendary dragon, it wouldn't be strange for it to have a roar that defies distance. After all, it's been said to have existed since the dawn of creation."

Orgis nodded in a satisfied manner, then his expression became serious again.

"But the problem is not that the legendary dragon has awakened."

"It's not ...?"

"The problem is that there may be someone in your country who has tamed that dragon."

"What? That couldn't be!"

Lexia couldn't help but yelp in response to Orgis's words.

However, neither Orgis nor Royle blamed her for yelping. They understood the situation.

"Well, who could that be?"

"I mean, that's exactly what we wanted to ask... Apparently, a mysterious man with black hair and black eyes went to investigate the valley, and when he returned, there was a small dragon beside him. I was expecting the dragon to be huge, because its roar shook the earth, but I'm sure that small dragon had something to do with it. It came from the valley, after all."

"Perhaps they made the legendary dragon smaller in some way. You know, it's quite rare, but you can get a medicine from Fantasy Rabbits that allows you to change the size of your body at will."

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Upon hearing Orgis's and Royle's words, Lexia and Luna turned to look at each other.

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"Lord Yuuya!"

"It's got to be Yuuya!"

""Yuuya?""

""Oh!""
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After blurting out Yuuya's name, they both clapped their hands over their mouths.

Orgis grinned at Lexia.

"It seems you know this man?"

"Uh, that's..."

"Now, would you mind telling me who, and where, this man is?"

Lexia flinched from the sharp gazes directed at her by both Royle and Orgis, but then she seemed to realize something that made her regain her composure.

Then...

"Okay, if you want to know that much, I'll tell you... He's going to be my husband someday!"

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"What, Lexia?!"
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Luna panicked as Lexia declared this, proudly puffing out her chest.

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"Hey, Lexia! You..."
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"What, you've got a complaint?"

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"No, not at all, but..."
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"No problem, then. It's only a matter of time!"

"But you can't just..."

Lexia and the other young lady suddenly started arguing, while Orgis could do nothing but stare in shock.

Then Orgis regained his composure and cleared his throat.

"Ahem! Uh... Um, is everything okay?"

"What?! Oh, sorry! We forgot you two were still here!"



"Well, it's all right. It seems the Kingdom of Arselia has been blessed with a lot of good citizens. At first, I was surprised that Lord Owen wasn't here, but...the woman there also seems to be incredibly skilled."

"Yeah, Luna is strong, huh?"

"...Hmph."

Luna, who was suddenly thrown off the topic, just snorted.

Seeing the tension between them, Orgis laughed and then flashed a sharp gaze that Lexia and Luna failed to notice.

"Ah, I'm so jealous. But our country hasn't lost, either, has it?"

"Huh? What do you mean?"

When Lexia tilted her head curiously, Orgis gave her a smile filled with determination.

"After all, we succeeded in bringing the famous Deity of Swords to our country."

""Huh?!""

Just like the legendary dragon, those with the title of Deity were also something akin to fairy tales to Lexia and the others.

The fact that this land was able to ally with such a being meant they possessed incredible military power.

"That's why I'm thinking of having a fun duel at our country's upcoming National Foundation Festival."

"If I remember right, the country of Regal is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary this year."

"That's correct."

Lexia was using much more casual speech now, but Orgis didn't seem to mind as he continued.

"Of course, I'm planning on having the Kingdom of Arselia attend as guests as well, but... How about...if you don't mind...I'd like to have a duel between our

country's Deity of Swords and your Yuuya."

"Huh?!"

"Oh, if it's not possible... I mean, in front of the whole country... Perhaps the Deity of Swords is too tough an opponent?"

"What did you just say?"

"Hmm? Did I say something strange? This is the Deity of Swords we're talking about here. You already know the result, right?"

"Are you saying Lord Yuuya will lose?!"

"Oh, hey, Lexia...? Don't go saying too much, now...!"

"You be quiet, Luna!"

Luna, who felt the conversation was taking an unpleasant turn, tried to dissuade Lexia, but the princess did not stop.

"Okay, if you're going to go so far as to say that, then why not do it?! Lord Yuuya is the stronger one for sure!"

The moment Lexia said that, the corners of Orgis's mouth curved up like a cat observing a mouse in a trap.

"I see, I see! So you agree to the duel! Well, that's good, that's good."

"Of course! You think I'm not going to rise to the challenge after everything you've just said?!"

"Oh, darn it! Just don't get me involved!"

Orgis's true purpose was to investigate the mysterious individual known as Yuuya, but Lexia, unaware of this, had fallen for Orgis's bait.

Thus, Yuuya once again got caught up in a huge amount of trouble, again completely without his knowledge.

Afterword

Thank you for purchasing this novel.

I'm the author, Miku.

Thanks to everyone, we were able to release the fifth volume quickly.

Thank you very much.

This time around, Yuuya became friends with a legendary dragon and even the Demon power that resided in Yuti, and as usual, he's taken further steps away from the peaceful and calm life he really desires.

I wondered how Yuuya would fight against the Deity of Fists, one who has truly mastered the power of the Demon.

While Yuuya was getting into trouble as usual, I was writing away as usual, and I continued writing without knowing where Yuuya and the others were headed.

As a result, Volume 5 was completed without me even knowing how things were going to end up, which was very interesting.

Now, for the first time, a country other than the Arselian Kingdom, where Lexia and her friends live, has made an appearance in the other world. A conversation between Lexia, who was visiting there, and the king of the other country causes Yuuya to become involved in a strange conflict without his knowledge.

Furthermore, some of the Deities have fallen to the Demonic influence, and the Demons are planning to start a full-scale war against the remaining Deities.

What's more, upon learning that the Deity of Fists has been defeated, the Demons decided to focus on whoever defeated the deity and eradicate this new obstacle. Poor Yuuya; it's just one thing after another for him.

I would be happy if you would continue to follow Yuuya's adventures.

Now I would like to thank the editor in charge for working with me on this book.

I would like to thank Rein Kuwashima, who makes this work even more appealing with their cool illustrations every time.

And once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the readers who picked up this work and read it.

Thank you very much.

See you then.

Miku

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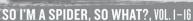
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