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illustrator

The **FRUIT** of **EVOLUTION**

Before I knew it,
my life had it made!

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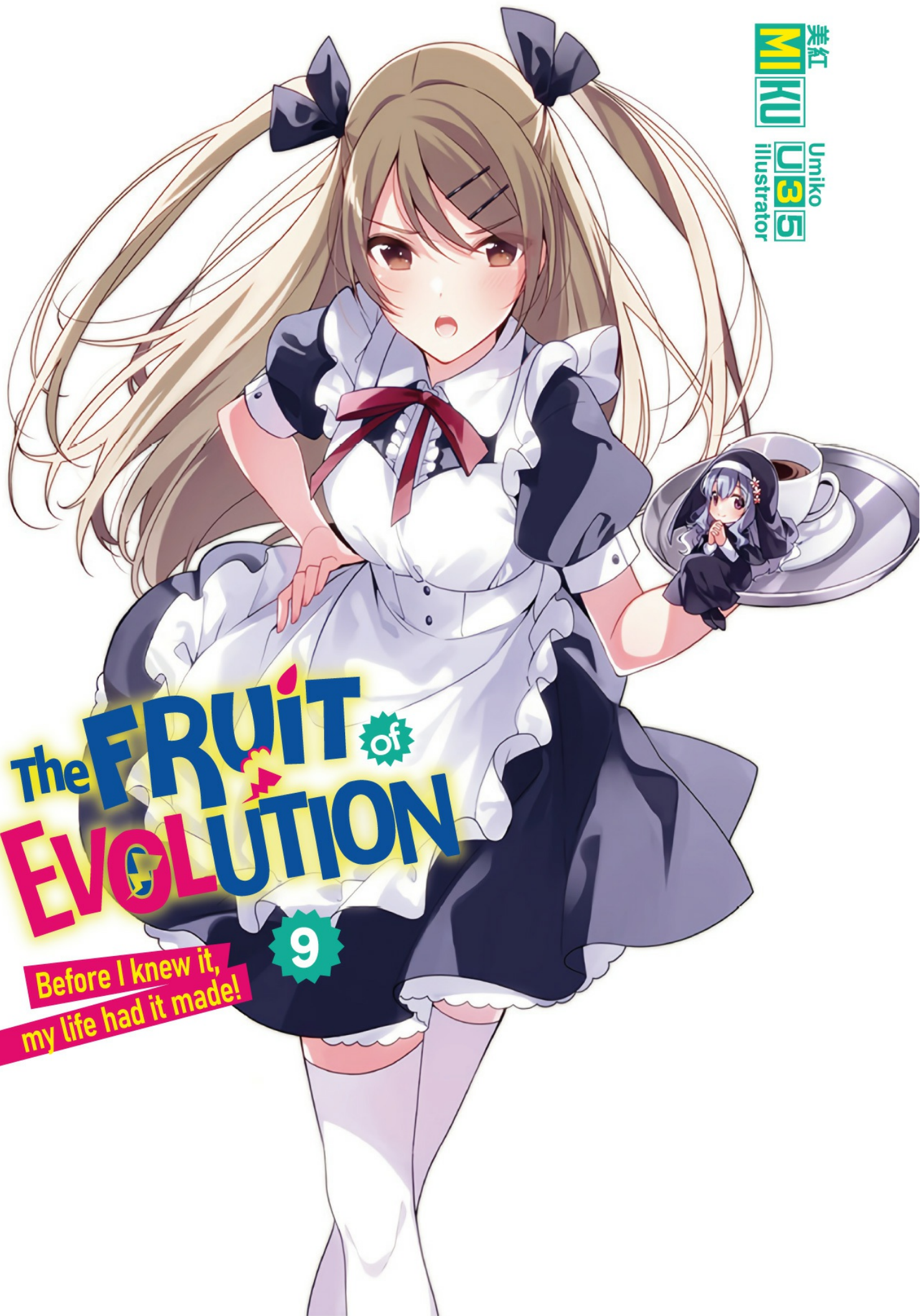
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The **FRUIT** of **EVOLUTION**

9

Before I knew it,
my life had it made!



Helen
Rosa
.....
Class F

Rachel
Matten
.....
Class F

"Don't stare
too much...
I'll kill you,
okay!?"



Irene
Prime
Class F

“Heh.. That’s quite
the interesting outfit.
It really makes me stand
out, doesn’t it?”

“How
about
this?!?”

Flora
Redrant
Class F



Seichi
Human

Karen
Kannazuki
Former
Student Council
President

Airi
Seto
Gal

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THE FRUIT OF EVOLUTION 9

Before I knew it, my
life had it made!

Miku 美紅



Chapter 1: The School Festival

“The school festival is coming up,” Beatrice announced during homeroom the next morning.

Intrigued, I asked, “The school festival?”

“Yes, the school festival,” she confirmed. “The headmaster decided to go ahead and hold it... Probably hoping to lift the gloomy atmosphere around here.”

“Does that mean... no classes?!” Agnos exclaimed, his eyes lighting up.

“That’s exactly what it means,” Beatrice replied with a smile.

Agnos punched the air with a jubilant cry. “Yessssssssss!”

Blud, however, remained skeptical. “Hmph... Do we really have the luxury of holding a school festival? The Demon Army might attack again.”

“Oh?” Agnos retorted. “Just as we’re about to get excited about something fun, you have to go and rain on our parade!”

“I’m merely stating the facts, am I not?” he countered.

Trying to lighten the mood, Helen chimed in, “Buuut Seiichi-san is here, so it’ll be all right, won’t it?”

“That’s true,” Blud conceded.

With a somewhat annoyed tone, Rachel interjected, “Can’t you just agree without criticism once in a while?!”

Solemnly, Blud responded with a nod.

I was taken aback. “No, Blud, you can’t settle for such weak logic, can you?!”

Holding her head as if suffering from a headache, Helen spoke up, “Anything you say is pointless... you walking paradox...”

“Walking paradox?! You’re calling me a paradox?!” I exclaimed.

“Isn’t it absurd?” she quipped. “After blowing away a dungeon, you casually bring back another new person with you.”

Agnos agreed, “That’s right!”

“Ehehehe... Can everyone please just be nice to me?” Zora asked softly.

After returning from the dungeon and discussing what to do with Zora, it was decided that she would live as a student, just like Saria and the others.

Hearing Helen’s words, I couldn’t shake my incredulity. *Why do these inexplicable events keep happening?!*

Setting aside my own mental turmoil, I had been worried about how Zora would be received, given her serpentine hair and the petrifying gaze that she concealed behind glasses. Thankfully, everyone welcomed her without hesitation, which was a relief.

Beatrice admitted, “I was pretty surprised. When Seiichi-san asked about the glasses, I wondered what they were for... I never imagined they’d serve such a purpose.”

Agnos exclaimed, “I’ve got it! Now I know why Seiichi-san is so popular... I just need to be bold and outrageous!”

“That seems like a misguided notion,” Blud replied.

Helen added, “To enchant the opposite sex, all you need is beauty.”

Confused by the unusual responses, I blurted out, “That, that might not be quite right either...”

“Oh, sorry for speaking out of turn!” I apologized quickly.

Beatrice-san’s words were genuinely praising me... Right? Or am I just being paranoid?

Continuing, Beatrice said, “Anyway, since the headmaster is set on holding the school festival, we need to think of something to contribute. Does anyone have any ideas?”

Everyone hummed in unison, lost in thought.

I said, “Wait, isn’t there usually something traditional for school festivals?” Since they were also customary in this world, I assumed there’d be standard options.

Flora offered a wry smile, explaining, “Well, sensei, while there are options, the classic choice is typically a play.”

Inspired, I suggested, “Why not a play then?”

“It’s not that simple. I doubt other classes would allow us to use their stage,” Blud interjected.

I hadn’t anticipated such a fundamental refusal to stage a play. “Really...?”

As I contemplated alternatives, Flora turned to me, seemingly with an idea.

“Ah, Seiichi-san! You’re from another world originally, right?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“In that case, what were school festivals like in your hometown?” she inquired, her curiosity piqued.

Reflecting, I replied, “My hometown’s school festival, hmmm... Well, we did plays, of course, but aside from that, there were food sales, haunted house classrooms, and then there was always the cosplay café.”

“Cosplay café?” Everyone tilted their heads, unfamiliar with the term.

“A cosplay café is... Well, to put it simply, a café where everyone dresses up, like as butlers and maids, to serve customers. Now that I think about it, with all the handsome guys and pretty girls in this class, it might not be a bad idea.”

That said, Flora had the charm of a handsome guy, though she could easily be considered a beautiful girl as well.

“Pretty girls...” Helen’s face turned red.

Agnos breathed heavily through his nose at the thought of what I’d just described.

“A café, huh... I don’t think that’s a bad idea, but who will be cooking?” Berard asked.

At his words, Helen tensed visibly. “Well, those who have the skill should take charge, right?”

“Right... So, who here can cook?” Berard questioned, prompting raised hands from a scattering of men and all the women except Zora, Lulune, and Helen.

“Eh, Helen, you can’t cook?!” Berard asked, surprised.

“Quiet! It’s not like it’s ever been an issue! Besides, Agnos hasn’t raised his hand either, has he?!” Helen retorted.

“Well, I can make edible stuff, but I can’t do the fancy kind of cooking you’d expect at a café...” Agnos admitted.

Helen was stunned. “What?! You can cook, Agnos?!”

Zora’s inability to cook is understandable given her long-term seal, and Lulune is a lost cause, but Helen’s lack of cooking skills is a surprise. Anyway...

Beatrice turned her attention to me. “I saw you raise your hand subtly. Are you planning to participate?”

“Is that not allowed?” I replied, slightly puzzled.

“It’s just that you needn’t do anything,” Beatrice said with a smile.

Along with mine in the collection of raised hands, Louisse and Routier had responded too. *They shouldn’t even be here, right? Yet, they seem eager. Well, it is a festival. The more the merrier, I suppose.*

“Anyway, it seems like we’re leaning toward doing a café... Is that all right?” Beatrice asked.

“Why not? If it’s a cosplay café, I can showcase my beauty,” Helen proclaimed.

“Uh, um... I think that’s fine with me as well,” Leon added timidly. He was not one to voice his opinion often. The rest of the group seemed to accept the overall idea.

Seeing that everyone agreed, Beatrice announced, “They haven’t decided on the full schedule yet, but it would be good to start thinking about costumes and

the menu now. Also, since the cooking will probably be done in shifts, it might be a good idea for our cooks to show their skills beforehand.”

Agnos exclaimed, “Wow, Beatrice-san! No studying and just eating instead... That’s the best plan ever!”

Beatrice chuckled at Agnos’s brutally honest comment. “As much as I encourage you to focus on your studies, it’s also important that you enjoy yourselves, as per the headmaster’s goal of ‘having fun.’ Everyone work hard to create something great.”

As Beatrice tried to conclude the homeroom, Agnos and the others exchanged glances. “What are you saying, Beatrice-san?” Agnos asked.

“Eh?” Beatrice replied.

“That’s riiight. You should participate too, Beatrice-senseiii,” Agnos suggested, and the others nodded in agreement.

Caught off guard by their suggestion, Beatrice stammered, “Eh... Eeeeeeeh?! I-I mean...”

She searched her mind for an excuse, utterly taken aback by the confrontation of their expectant gazes.

“No way, Beatrice-sensei! You have to join us in the cosplay thing too!” Flora exclaimed.

Beatrice-san was at a loss for words, her face a picture of disbelief. “Eh— That is...”

Flora’s smile deepened, her eyes sparkling with mischief. “Of course, we’ll have you in a maid outfit too!”

“No, no, no, that’s not acceptable! I’m here to supervise everyone...” Beatrice-san’s voice was firm but laced with a hint of desperation.

Quick to shut down her excuse, Agnos said, “That’s not going to fly, Beatrice-san! If the headmaster wants us to ‘have fun’ at the festival, then you’ve got to participate too!”

The others chimed in, their voices a chorus of persuasion. “Just give in already.”

“Whaaaaat?!”

As I watched the scene unfold, I felt warm inside. It reminded me of my high school days on Earth when students would gather around their favorite teachers with similar enthusiasm. *I was always an outsider, never part of the group... Huh? Why am I tearing up?*

Flora approached me, her eyes lit with excitement. “Seiichi-sensei! You’ve been keeping to yourself, but you’re joining in too, right?”

I was startled, not expecting to be pulled into the fray as well. “Eh?”

Flora’s grin was infectious. “Of course, since Louisse and Routier are participating, you’re being roped in, too, Seiichi-sensei!”

As I looked around at the sea of smiling faces, I wondered if I could really enjoy this event. I had never experienced the pleasure of a festival; those memories were tainted by my recollections of being bullied... But maybe, just maybe, this time would be different.

※ ※ ※

While Seiichi and his friends were discussing the school festival, a parallel conversation was taking place among the Heroes.

“What?! Seiichi-kun is becoming a butler?!”

“Huh?”

“Ah, no, never mind. Ha, huh... So, we were talking about the school festival?”

Karen Kannazuki, the student council president, was leading the discussion, flanked by the Takamiya siblings and Araki Kenji, Seiichi’s childhood friends. “Yes, it seems our school is holding a festival, and we, as Heroes, are allowed to participate as a class. So, I’d like to hear any ideas you might have.”

The Heroes, however, reacted poorly to the entire concept.

“But, a school festival...”

“Are we really in a position to be doing this...?”

“I just want to go home...”

The Heroes, who had once been confident in their strength, now felt powerless and fearful after the last attack by the Demon Army. Their usual bravado had given way to despair.

Kisaragi Masaya, his face scarred from their previous fight, screamed in frustration, his voice raw and anguished, “Are you mocking us?! I got seriously injured! And now they’re holding a school festival?! There’s a limit to joking around!”

Kannazuki gazed at him with pity. This was a far cry from the confident Kisaragi they once knew. “Kisaragi...”

The Heroes, including Kisaragi, continued to vent their frustrations at the harsh reality of their situation. “I hate this world! Send me back already! On Earth... in Japan, I wouldn’t have lost...”

Unfortunately, that was impossible—the Heroes possessed no means to return to Earth. Moreover, unbeknownst to anyone except Kannazuki, they were bound by the Armlets of Subordination, which prevented them from escaping. Without help, they were powerless to change their situation.

If this world had acted for the sake of a certain “human” however, perhaps there would have been a way back to Earth. But now, having learned of that “human’s” past, this world was unlikely to show such kindness.

Confronted with the despondent Heroes, Kannazuki let out a deep sigh. “Ah... I want to quit this position already...”

Shouta and the other childhood friends who knew of Kannazuki’s struggles looked on with concerned expressions. “Kannazuki-senpai...”

Feeling their gaze, she made a decision. “This is a good opportunity. Actually, there’s someone I’ve been wanting you all to meet.”

Shouta and the others were perplexed by her sudden change of tone. “Huh?”

Seeing their response, her smile deepened, hinting at a plan unfolding in her mind.

Chapter 2: Tasting Session

“Well then, shall we start preparing the menu for the café?” Beatrice asked, her eyes sparkling with enthusiasm.

“Okay!” the class responded in unison, eager to begin.

Having decided on the café for the school festival, we had agreed to Beatrice’s suggestion to create test dishes. Now in the Home EConomics classroom, we were surrounded by the familiar sights and smells of a kitchen.

“It’s my first time in this Home EC room, but it’s not much different from Earth’s,” I remarked, noting how familiar the layout of the sinks and stoves appeared. “Maybe it’s like the magical cameras from the royal capital’s cooking competition—magic really is incredible.”

Saria, meanwhile, was already in her element. “Wow! Seiichi, this kitchen is so spacious! I can probably cook better stuff here than in the forest!”

Agnos’s eyes widened in surprise at Saria’s casual remark. “In the forest?!” he echoed, clearly impressed by her resourcefulness. When you thought about it, the fact that Saria could produce high-quality food without the proper equipment spoke volumes about her skills.

Beatrice clapped her hands together, bringing us back to the task at hand. “Okay, let’s limit the chitchat. Now, to gauge everyone’s cooking skills, why don’t we use the ingredients available here in this classroom to create what you imagine would be on the café’s menu?”

Helen looked less than thrilled. “Be-Beatrice-sensei... Does that mean... I have to try as well...? You know I can’t cook,” she said, panic lacing her voice.

Beatrice responded with a cheerful smile. “Yes!”

Helen’s face fell, and Agnos couldn’t resist teasing her. “Helen, just give up.”

“Even if the food turns out horribly, no one will mind,” he added, chuckling.

Helen snapped back with a swift punch to his gut, her eyes blazing with determination. “Shut up!”

“Guboaah?! Wh-Why... I was just trying to comfort you!” Agnos exclaimed, clutching his stomach as he collapsed to the floor. “This is not what I had in mind for ‘comforting,’” he added with a wince.

Helen’s sharp punch had left him reeling, and it was evident that her strength needn’t extend to her cooking skills.

Despite the initial commotion, she reluctantly began to cook. It soon became apparent that the class had a wide range of culinary skills. Irene, for instance, used unusual cooking tools and ingredients to prepare a dish fit for a palace.

“I will create perfect dishes, as perfection is what I embody,” she declared.

Rachel, on the other hand, cheerfully prepared a cake. “For the café, cakes would be lovelyyy,” she said, her eyes shining with enthusiasm.

Flora, meanwhile, had already finished making what looked like pancakes and was stealthily taking bites. “This turned out nice! Maybe I can sneak a little taste...” she said, her eyes sparkling with mischief. *Yep, it’s clear that Flora had some cooking skills, but leaving her alone in the kitchen might not be the best idea.*

Lulune, as always, was a bit of a wild card. “This is... munch munch... delicious... Do we really... munch munch... need to cook... munch munch... at all?” she mumbled; her mouth full of food.

As everyone was progressing with their unique styles of cooking, Saria in her apron suddenly transformed into a gorilla. “Seiichi, make sure to eat a lot of this, I’ll put lots of love into it,” she said in her deep, raspy gorilla voice.

“Why, though?! Why not cook in your human form?!” I asked, taken aback by the sudden change.

“Eh? I can do finer work in this form!” Saria replied, her gorilla hands moving deftly as she prepared a cake.

“With those thick fingers?!” I exclaimed, incredulous.

Saria chuckled. “I know I’m cute in this apron, no need to be shy about it...”

I shook my head, still trying to wrap my mind around the situation. “What part of this am I being shy about?! You’re a gorilla in an apron, for crying out loud!”

Despite the absurdity of it all, her dishes, cakes and sandwiches looked delicious. She was impressively skilled, as expected.

Time flew by quickly, and soon it came to the tasting session. The testers consisted of myself, Beatrice, Origa, Zora, Routier and Louise; a total of six. Although Routier and Louise were also participating in our café, we’d decided it would be best if the students mostly handled the cooking.

“Let’s start with the dishes prepared by the gentlemen,” Beatrice-san suggested.

First up was Agnos’s dish, which was... interesting.

“What a... unique presentation,” I commented, trying to be diplomatic.

Agnos served a charred bone-in meat dish and plated it stylishly. While it tasted decent, it certainly didn’t fit the café vibe.

Blud’s dish was presented next, looking like part of an elegant British afternoon tea.

“Hmmm... This should be café-like enough,” Beatrice said, impressed.

“This is... impressive,” Origa added.

“It looks like something you’d find in a popular restaurant in the capital.” Zora’s eyes were wide with wonder.

“It would be well received even by the nobility in my country,” Routier said in praise.

They proceeded to taste it.

“Whoa! I didn’t know food could be this delicious!” Louise exclaimed.

“Mmm, tasty,” I agreed.

Beatrice, Louise and Routier all complimented Blud’s cooking enthusiastically. Indeed, he would definitely be working in the kitchen.

However, since he's quite charming, it'd be nice if he could also interact with the customers... Well, we could manage that with a shift rotation.

Berard's dish was next; a very ordinary yet perfectly acceptable plate of toast with fried eggs. It tasted fine, giving everyone confidence that Berard would be capable in the kitchen.

Lastly, Leon presented his dish: pasta.

"Do you really want to sample a dish that I've made?" he questioned meekly. "Oh, I apologize! I won't argue—I'll just present it!" Despite his humility, the pasta was delicious, and it was clear that Leon would be fine cooking too.

This tasting session was already showing evidence for a promising café at the school festival.

As we continued, it became clear that every man, with the exception of Agnos, possessed impressive culinary skills—though with some training, Agnos could improve as well. The men had proven to be surprisingly adept in the kitchen, and now it was time to sample the dishes prepared by the women.

Irene confidently supplied her creation, declaring, "Here you go—perfect cooking from a perfect person!" The dish was a masterpiece of presentation, with a crispy thin brown spiral design and a green sauce that added a pop of color. While it tasted good, the flavors were unfamiliar to me, and I couldn't help but feel that my palate was too unsophisticated to appreciate its culinary complexity.

Louisse and Routier, on the other hand, were thoroughly impressed.

"This is... incredible..." Louisse exclaimed.

Routier said, "Yeah... It seems like something you would be served at a royal castle..."

Irene beamed with pride, explaining, "Of course. I used our most valuable premium ingredients and applied my perfect cooking skills."

Beatrice was quick to point out the flaw in Irene's approach. She stated, "This is financially impractical. So, it's not approved." Irene's disregard for the school

budget was a deal-breaker, and her dish, however exquisite, was not feasible for the café.

Next, Rachel presented a simple yet delicious shortcake, earning unanimous approval. *Yep, this one's a keeper*, I thought to myself.

After that it was Flora's turn, but she sheepishly admitted, "Um... I realized it was all gone before we could taste it..." While she assured us that her dish was delicious, the fact that it was already consumed meant that it couldn't be considered for the café.

"Not approved," Beatrice declared, much to Flora's dismay.

Flora's excuse about her dish being gone before it could be tasted raised some eyebrows. It seemed unlikely, especially since I had been watching closely as she prepared it and there had been plenty of time only moments before.

Lulune tried to interject, "Master! I—"

She was promptly cut off with a "Next!" Beatrice-san wasn't interested in humoring anything she said since Lulune hadn't actually cooked anything.

Next up was Saria—back in her human form—who presented her dish with a bright smile. "Here! I made omurice!" She revealed a perfectly cooked omelet with a soft, fluffy texture. On top of it, she had artfully drawn a heart with ketchup.

There was a concerted reaction.

"Mmm! This is delicious!"

"Mmm, Saria's cooking is tasty."

I was already familiar with Saria's culinary skills, but this was truly exceptional. How she mastered these skills as a gorilla was a mystery to me. Zora, Origa, and Beatrice praised it generously, and Saria was easily appointed to the cooking team.

Finally, it was Helen's turn to present her dish. "Here, it's ready," she said, placing a plate in front of us. To our surprise, it was just an empty plate.

"Where's the food?!" I asked, confused.

“It vanished,” Helen replied matter-of-factly.

“What do you mean ‘it vanished’?!” Beatrice-san exclaimed, equally perplexed.

Helen pointed insistently at a spot on the plate. “Look, some is still here!” she said, her eyes wide with conviction.

We followed her gaze, and that’s when we saw it; a single barely visible black speck at the spot she was pointing to.

“Um... What exactly is this?” I asked, staring at the plate in disbelief.

Helen replied, her expression serious, “It’s the residue of my cooking.”

“Could you not try to feed us the leftovers?!” I exclaimed. *This isn’t even cooking anymore!*

Faced with Helen’s astounding inability to cook, Beatrice-san managed a wry smile and found a diplomatic way to address the situation.

“Um... Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, and it seems cooking might not be Helen’s strong suit. How about we have you handle serving or taking orders instead? It’s okay, one can live a fulfilled life without cooking skills.”

Helen quietly sobbed; her culinary dreams shattered. Beatrice’s comment had been the final blow.

In the end, the cooking team was to be comprised of Blud, Berard, Leon, Rachel, and Saria. Helen was left to explore other avenues where her skills might shine.

Chapter 3: The Unexpected...

“All right! Let’s decide on the dishes to serve, and we will be ready to—”

“Wait a minute.”

“Hmm?”

Just as we were finalizing choosing the cooking team and the menu, Helen brought us to an abrupt halt.

She pointed at me and declared boldly, “Seiichi-sensei... you should cook as well.”

I was taken aback. “Eh?” I paused, then exclaimed, “Eeeeeh?! Me? Cook...?”

Helen’s unexpected challenge did have merit. She said, “That’s only fair, right? Excluding young Origa-chan and Zora-san, who don’t know about cooking, Beatrice-sensei, Louise-san, and Routier-san can cook, but what about you, Seiichi-sensei?”

I tried to protest. “Um... I haven’t really cooked before, so I don’t see why I need to...”

Helen was quick to counter. “I said I couldn’t cook either, right?”

Damn it, looks like I can no longer refuse. I reluctantly agreed. “But... we’ve pretty much decided on all the food items...”

As a complete novice in the kitchen, complicated dishes were out of the question—hell, I barely knew any recipes. But then I remembered a cooking class I took a long time ago. “Ah, I can probably manage Hamburg steaks.”

Just as I was about to begin, an announcement came out of nowhere.

>You have acquired the Cooking skill.

I was surprised by how prepared my body suddenly became. Recomposing myself, I started prepping the food.

“Um... After you knead the ground meat, there’s supposed to be this step to remove trapped air, right?” I asked, casually tossing the slightly flattened meat in my hand.

THUMP!

Silence followed. Everyone just stared. I looked down at my empty hand in disbelief. Nothing was left. *Why did this happen?! I just acquired the Cooking skill moments ago, didn’t I?! Why this catastrophic outcome?! Helen’s disaster left some traces, but mine? Not even a hint of meat is left in my hand!* It was almost impressive in its inefficiency. I had to laugh it off or I wouldn’t have been able to handle it!

As an awkward silence filled the room, another announcement rang out in my mind.

>Cooking skill has evolved into Iron Chef skill.

Even the announcements are feeling sorry for me!

Despite the terrible start, I began again as if nothing had happened. This time, the meat didn’t disappear, and I managed to remove the air pockets successfully. “Yeah, that went well!” I exclaimed, trying to sound confident.

“You know we can’t just pretend that earlier disaster didn’t happen, right?” Helen said sharply, raising an eyebrow.

“Yeah...” I trailed off, unable to defend myself.

Fortunately, the rest of the cooking process went smoothly, thanks to my newly evolved Iron Chef skill, which helped me understand exactly how to proceed with each step. “It’s done!” I announced, proudly presenting the meat patties.

“Wow!” The reactions were unanimous. I finished making the sauce and plated the Hamburg steaks beautifully, then carried them over. I even made enough for everyone, with a second helping for Lulune, just in case.

“Hey, not bad.”

“If you can do this, why was it such a disaster before...?”

I just shrugged, relieved that it went well in the end.

“Don’t ask any more from me, please. My heart can’t take it.”

That said, I was confident that my Hamburg steaks would redeem me.

“Let’s try Seiichi-san’s dish now,” Beatrice suggested.

As Lulune was about to take a bite of her second serving, the door to the Home EConomics classroom burst open, and a woman with long black hair crawled in.

“Seiichi-kun’s homemade cookingggggggggggg!” she exclaimed, with her eyes fixed on the meat patty Lulune held.

“Who are youuuuuuuuuuuuuuu?!” I asked, shocked, as she lunged at the Hamburg steak like a terrifying cross between Sadako and Teke Teke.

Without hesitation, she devoured it all, leaving us all stunned and speechless.



“Ahh... Perfect... I could die happy now...” the woman sighed, her eyes closed in bliss.

“Ah, no! My Hamburg steak!” Lulune cried out, devastated.

As I turned to the unexpected intruder, I realized I recognized the figure. “Eh... Kannazuki-senpai?!” I asked, stunned.

“That’s right! It’s me, Karen Kannazuki!” she replied, her appearance still scarily unsettling.

“I can’t believe it!” I exclaimed. *Who would recognize their respected senior after they made such a monstrously obnoxious entrance? Any horror movie creature would pale in comparison.*

More importantly... I asked, “Why are you here?”

Just as Kannazuki-senpai began to explain, I thought to myself, *I’ve never seen Kannazuki-senpai move so creepily before...* Her behavior at this moment was unlike anything I had experienced.

“You definitely wouldn’t show that to the others again, right? That... *thing* you became,” I added, trying to process what was happening.

“No, I wouldn’t, and especially not in front of Seiichi, right?” Kannazuki-senpai agreed, a hint of embarrassment in her voice.

More people started trickling into the Home EConomics classroom. While Saria and the others were shocked by Kannazuki-senpai’s appearance, I became even more bewildered.

“Uh... why are Shouta and everyone else here?” I asked, confused.

“I brought them,” Kannazuki-senpai replied matter-of-factly.

“Why would you do that?!” I exclaimed, my frustration filling the room.

Chapter 4: Chaos in the Home EConomics Classroom

“Wha-Wha-Wha-Wha-What...!”

Nothing had prepared me mentally to face these guys. I hastily pulled Kannazuki-senpai to a corner of the classroom.

“What were you thinking?!” I demanded, trying to make sense of the situation.

“Seiichi-kun... you’re quite bold, wanting me to say it out loud...” Kannazuki-senpai replied with a sly grin.

“Tell me! What are you planning?!” I pressed, exasperated.

“Well, since you dragged me away from everyone for a private moment, I thought maybe we could do some... ahem... or... uh... right here...” Kannazuki-senpai suggested, her words trailing off as she gazed at me with an unsettling intensity.

“That’s not what I want to hear at all!” I protested, startled by her outrageous suggestion. “Have you heard of a thing called timing?! Look at Shouta and everyone else’s faces! They’re confused! You get that, right?! This isn’t the time!” I pointed out, trying to reason with her.

Her expression suddenly softened. “Ha ha ha ha. I’m just happy to see you, Seiichi-kun.”

“I can’t make sense of anything anymore! Thanks, I guess?!” I said, caught off guard by her unexpected warmth.

Just then, Shouta, who had been watching us with suspicion, spoke up. “Kannazuki-senpai... What’s going on? That guy was one of the F-Class benchwarmers during the Clash of Classes... Do you know him?”

“What are you talking about? This is Seiichi-kun,” Kannazuki-senpai replied, in a matter-of-fact manner.

“What?” Shouta’s eyes widened in disbelief.

“Uh?!”

“Oh... Seriously, this person...”

Kannazuki-senpai words landed like a bombshell. They completely disregarded my mental readiness. *I knew we needed to meet quickly to remove the armlets, but it didn’t need to be done now... right?*

“No, no, no, Kannazuki-senpai? I get that you’ve missed Seiichi but mistaking him for a complete stranger is a bit much...” Shouta said, confused.

Kannazuki-senpai replied, removing my hood and exposing my face, “What?! Even after seeing this, you still say he’s not Seiichi-kun?!”

“No, that’s definitely someone else!” Shouta insisted. “Right?”

I knew it... When I ate the Fruit of Evolution, my appearance completely changed, and it would be hard for anyone to recognize me as Seiichi. But the real problem is that Kannazuki-senpai and Airin recognize me even now!

“Did someone call me?!” Airin suddenly appeared in the Home EConomics classroom.

“I didn’t caaaaaaallllllllll!” I shouted, baffled.

What’s going on here?! I thought S Class adventurers were the epitome of perversion, but apparently there were equally twisted people on Earth too! This is just too much! What’s happening? Does Airin have some special skill that even my body can’t acquire?

Airin’s friends entered behind her, equally perplexed.

“Airin! You just started running randomly...”

Between pants of breath, Airin said, “Seriously... the worst... Why did I have to run like that?”

“Airin, explain yourself.”

“I just felt like I had to see Sei-chan!”

“That’s not even an explanation!”

It seemed Shouta and the others felt just as overwhelmed by Airin as I was by Kannazuki-senpai.

Amid the chaos, with F-Class members completely out of the loop, a composed Beatrice-san finally spoke up.

“Um... Does anyone here have a particular reason for this... visit?” she asked, trying to restore order.

“What? Oh, sorry for the disturbance. That woman over there... well, she’s kind of like the leader of our Hero group. She suddenly yelled, ‘Seiichi-kun’s homemade cooking?!’ and charged in here with an indescribable appearance...” Shouta explained.

“Ah, it just so happens that Seiichi-sensei was making food at that moment. But how did you know that?” Beatrice replied.

“Eh...?”

“Um... did you just say ‘Seiichi’...?” Kenji asked.

“That’s what I’ve been saying, right? What? Do you not see it’s Seiichi-sensei either? Why don’t you recognize his face?”

Everyone silently stared at me, scrutinizing my face. I affirmed, “I’m... Seiichi.”

Silence fell once again, and then the loudest scream of the day filled the Home Economics classroom:
“WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAT?!”

※ ※ ※

To be fair, it makes no sense, right?! How on earth did I become the homeroom teacher of Class F at this school?!

After calming down Shouta and the others, I recounted everything from where it began in the Forest of Endless Heartbreak to the present. Since much of this was new information even to Beatrice-san and the others, they listened intently.

Shouta then responded with a bewildered comment: “Sorry, Seiichi-oniichan. I really can’t believe this...”

“His pudgy belly was the best to touch, and now it’s gone...!” Miu, his sister, said, her tone somber.

Am I imagining this? I decided I must have misheard her remark.

The others chimed in, teasing me about my transformation.

“Anyway, you really have changed, Seiichi-kun. I didn’t recognize you at all.”

“Yeah, yeah. Maybe now no one will make fun of you, huh?”

“Right. Who could make fun of him now...?” Eri, Shouta’s girlfriend; Rika, Kenji’s girlfriend; and Kenji himself joked.

“Seiichi-sensei... what exactly did you do?” asked Helen, exasperated.

I replied, “Wha— I, uh, dieted...?” Everyone from Shouta’s group instantly rejected my explanation, leaving me perplexed.

Saria, who had been quietly observing, spoke up with a sparkling smile, “I’d love to know what Seiichi was like as a kid...”

“Um... and you are...?” Shouta asked, looking puzzled.

Though I had indeed talked about surviving in the Forest of Endless Heartbreak, I realized I hadn’t properly introduced Saria. Explaining her story would be incredibly lengthy.

She turned to Shouta with a beaming smile.

“I’m Saria, and I’m Seiichi’s wife!” Another bombshell was dropped.

While Kannazuki-senpai and Airin’s group showed no surprise, Shouta and the others were stunned.

“Eh, wait, hold on. Wife... Wiiiiife?!”

“What do you mean?! Seiichi-niichan! Not just a girlfriend but a wife?!”

“Hey, hey... how much have you messed up without us knowing...”

“Ah... um... how do I even explain this...” I struggled to gather my thoughts.

“Wait, Seiichi. You... Sure, you gave us a rough idea of what’s been going on, but there are some major details you left out, aren’t there?!” Shouta asked, his voice filled with disbelief.

“Hey, hey... you don’t think I’m hiding things from you, right?!” I replied, trying to downplay the situation.

Shouta was having none of it. “We got that major announcement just now!” he exclaimed, referring to the revelation that Saria was my wife.

I knew I’d left out some significant details, but I hadn’t meant to cause such a stir. “Right, that just happened,” I admitted, trying to calm everyone.

Shouta continued, “You... I was worried when you weren’t with us, the Hero group, at the beginning. But through all the ups and downs, you always managed to make it through in unexpected ways, so I believed you were alive in this world. But this... This is way beyond what anyone could have expected!”

“Come on, calm down,” I said, in an attempt to soothe him. But I knew it was my fault for not being more open about my situation.

Lulune stepped forward, puffing out her chest. “Indeed. I was not mentioned in the previous discussion by our master, but I am Lulune, the servant of Lady Saria and our master, Seiichi.”

After that big revelation, the room erupted into chaos once again, leading to discussions about Al, Origa, Louise, and Routier.

The conversation was a wild and unpredictable ride, but I was grateful to have such loyal friends and companions by my side. And, as I looked around at the chaos, I couldn’t help but chuckle at the absurdity of it all. *Who would have thought that a Home EC classroom would be the setting for such a dramatic and hilarious reunion?*

Chapter 5: The Status of the Hero Party

“Well, that was chaotic, but I suppose we’re okay now,” I sighed.

Finally, after navigating that intense discussion, we shifted our focus to a serious matter—the armlets worn by Shouta and his friends. Thanks to my personal experiences and the complex tale I’d shared, I managed to convince them that the armlets’ effects were deceitfully concealed, and they could indeed be removed. We then proceeded to remove them from everyone’s wrists.

“Armlets of Subordination... I always thought it was weird we couldn’t take them off, but I am shocked to realize they are something so sinister.”

“That’s right, you can’t trust the Kaizell Empire...” Shouta, murmured, rubbing his wrist. Eri’s expression darkened in agreement. However, Blud was the most impacted by these words.

“To think, my father...”

“Ah... Blud, you’re not involved, so you don’t need to take it so hard...”

“No, even if it is my father’s doing, I’m a prince of the Kaizell Empire. I truly am sorry...”

Blud bowed deeply to Shouta and the others, revealing the pressure of his royal lineage. Seeing this, not only I but also Kannazuki-senpai and the others were at a loss for words.

In exasperation, Agnos smacked Blud on the head. “Idiot.”

“Ow! Why did you hit me?! Are you stupid?”

“*You’re* the stupid one! Why are you apologizing for something your father did?”

“But my father...”

“It’s wrong to merge your two identities. You haven’t personally done anything wrong to the Heroes, have you? If you start apologizing for it, you’re claiming your father’s sins as your own. That would be nonsense. And if the Heroes lump you in with your father, then in my eyes, they’re just as bad.”

Agnos’s third-party perspective felt particularly profound.

“Yeah, that’s true,” Kannazuki-senpai added with a faint smile. “Even if this whole situation is because of the Kaizell Empire or your father, if we judge someone like you who has nothing to do with it, then we’re no different than him.”

Taken aback by their words, Blud’s expression eventually evened out. Then he returned to his usual confident self.

“Hah... To think I’d be lectured by such a fool...” he said.

“Huh?! Why am I being insulted after saying something good?!” Agnos erupted.

“Don’t get me wrong. I *am* praising you,” Blud clarified.

“What? Well, then just say so... Wait, that’s not praise!” Agnos retorted.

Truly, their camaraderie was evident for all to see.

As the mood lightened, Shouta pondered aloud, “But still... thanks to Seiichi, we’ve been freed, right? What are we going to do now? Ah... that’s right. Without these armlets, we might be suspected when we go back to the Kaizell Empire...”

It was then that Kenji raised an obvious question. “By the way, why does Kannazuki-senpai still have her armlet on? Wasn’t hers removed?”

Surprisingly, Kannazuki-senpai puffed out her chest and shot a challenging look toward Airin. “Want to know why? Mufufu... Well, I guess I can tell you! The first person Seiichi-kun deactivated an Armlet of Subordination for was me!”

“What?! What’s that supposed to mean?!” Airin exclaimed.

“It’s not just that,” Kannazuki-senpai said, excitement building in her voice. “After it was broken, Seiichi-kun reattached it with his own hands, and because

of that, I became his property!”

I couldn't help but exclaim, “What are you trying to say? That's technically true, but there's a better way to say things, isn't there?! And why do you sound so happy about it?!”

Airin's eyes sparkled with desire. “That's so unfair! I want that too! I want Sei-chan to break and reattach mine! Then I'll also become his property!”

Agnos's expression turned stern. “What do you mean ‘unfair’? And what are you talking about?!”

Dismayed, I held my head in my hands. *I really didn't need to see this side of Kannazuki-senpai and Airin! I preferred them as my idols!*

Shouta muttered seriously, “So, if Seiichi does the reattaching, the authority of command transfers to him...”

Shocked, Agnos turned to him. “What are you thinking about?!”

He quickly corrected himself. “Huh? Oh, no! I'm not thinking about it the way Kannazuki-senpai was. I just was considering that if someone trustworthy reattaches it, not necessarily Seiichi, we wouldn't get caught...”

Kannazuki-senpai's expression turned serious. “Hmm... then should I take on the command role for everyone's armlets?”

Agnos's eyes widened in surprise. “Huh?”

Kannazuki-senpai continued, “If there's no problem with me doing it, then I will. If you're worried about me handling it, then perhaps pair up with someone. Like, Shouta and Miu could wear each other's to maintain control. How does that sound?”

After a brief discussion, Shouta agreed, and a few others responded. “That sounds good... We're fine with Kannazuki-senpai handling it, if that's fine with you?”

“Sure, I'll take care of it. What will Seto do?”

“I want Sei-chan to do it for me!” Airin remarked, her eyes sparkling with desire.

“But why?!” I asked, confused.

“Ah... well, Airin aside, the rest of you just pair up,” Kannazuki-senpai explained.

“Yeah, we’re always together anyway,” Miu added, nodding in agreement.

“That sounds like the right solution,” Shouta said, relieved.

“I see... So, Seto-kun, just pair up with another girl. One servant of Seiichi-kun is enough,” Kannazuki-senpai said with a sly smile.

Please, Kannazuki-senpai. Sometimes it’s important to keep up appearances, right?

“Absolutely not! So... here goes!” Airin exclaimed, determination in her voice.

“Huh? Ah!” I cried out in surprise as Airin grabbed my hand and swiftly fitted the armlet onto her own arm.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” I shouted, shocked and embarrassed by the sudden turn of events.



Airin screamed out in excitement, “Ehehe... Now I’m also Sei-chan’s property!”

Kannazuki-senpai’s face contorted in frustration. “Seto-kunnnnnnnnn! If you weren’t here, I would have been the only one belonging to Seiichi-kun!”

“Scary, scary, scary, scary!” said Airin in a taunting chant.

Seeing Kannazuki-senpai in such a state, I was seriously freaked out. And I wasn’t the only one—we were all shocked.

Rika’s sudden question broke through the chaos. “By the way... why are Seiichi-kun and his class in this Home EConomics room? Are you having a cooking class?”

“Ah? Oh, no, that’s not it,” I explained. “You see, the school festival coming up, right? Our class decided to do a cosplay café, so we were here to figure out the menu and see who can cook what.”

“Cosplay café?!” Rika repeated, surprised.

My words caused Shouta and the others to widen their eyes in shock. “Hey, hey... we haven’t even had time to process the attack from the other day, and Seiichi’s class is already thinking about the school festival?”

“Wait a minute, oniichan!” Kenji exclaimed. “The one who defeated the attackers that time was...”

“Eh? It was youuuuuuuuuuuu?!” Shouta and the others asked in unison, their eyes fixed on me, brows high in surprise.

Due to my hood, Shouta and the others hadn’t realized that I was the one who had taken down the assailants from the Demon Army. I didn’t really feel like I had defeated them, though.

“Seiichi, you seem to have become quite strong without even realizing it,” Kenji said, a hint of admiration in his voice.

“Really? I mean, you’re the one who trained intensely and consistently with your boxing, so in that sense...” I replied, unsure of what to say.

“No, man, I was too scared to move when the time came... It was pathetic,” Kenji said, his eyes downcast. “I thought I was getting stronger to help you in battle, but now it turns out you’re stronger than me...”

I never really knew why Kenji, who used to be a crybaby, started boxing. But now I understood...

“You’re amazing, Seiichi-kun. We were worried about how you were doing since you weren’t with us Heroes, but now you’re even stronger than us,” Shouta commented, his eyes wide with admiration.

“Yeah, Seiichi-niichan, you always go way beyond what’s expected,” Kenji added, nodding in agreement.

“Uh, really?” I replied uncertainly.

“Were you also this weird in the other world?” Helen asked, curiosity tinging her voice.

“That’s a baseless accusation!” I retorted, trying to defend myself, but Helen clearly didn’t believe me. I could cry.

As I thought about how much we’d strayed from the topic of the cosplay café, Kannazuki-senpai suddenly looked at me with sparkling eyes. “Seiichi-kun, you’re going to cosplay too, right?”

“Um... yes,” I replied hesitantly.

“You’re wearing a Speedo, right?!” Kannazuki-senpai exclaimed, her eyes shining with excitement.

“A Speedo?!” I repeated, shocked. “Why on earth would that be the first option that came to your mind?!”

As I struggled to deal with Kannazuki-senpai pressing forward, Airin shoved her aside. “Out of the way!”

“Oof!” Kannazuki-senpai stumbled backward.

“Kannazuki-senpai?!” I called out of concern.

“Sei-chan! Since it’s a café, does that mean there will be dishes made by Sei-chan?!” Airin asked, her eyes alit with eagerness.

“Well, I guess? I had just finished cooking, and we were about to have everyone evaluate it when Kannazuki-senpai and the others arrived...”

“It’s already done?!”

“Ha ha ha ha! Too bad, Seto-kun! I already ate Seiichi-kun’s cooking!” Kannazuki-senpai triumphantly announced as she stood up.

“What did you say?! Sei-chan, what does this mean?! Why didn’t you make anything for me?!” Airin demanded, her voice rising in anger.

“Isn’t that unreasonable?!” I replied, trying to defend myself.

Kannazuki-senpai might be boasting, but that spare meal was for Lulune. Now she’s upset since there were no seconds available.

I peeled the still-complaining Airin off me and turned to Shouta. “Hey, I noticed you were surprised that we were already preparing for the school festival. Aren’t you and the other Heroes doing anything?”

“Well... about that...” he hesitated.

“What is it?” I pressed, curious.

“Everyone’s spirits were completely broken after that last attack,” Shouta admitted, disappointment heavy in his voice.

Surprised, I repeated, “What? Your spirits were broken?”

He nodded. “When we were first summoned to the Kaizell Empire, we were excited. We thought we’d get to be Heroes like in stories. Plus, we were told that we were stronger than the people of this world...”

“Really?” I asked, skeptical. *Heroes stronger than this world’s inhabitants?* I glanced at the members of Class F and then at Lousse and the others, finding it hard to believe.

I don’t know the current status or levels of today’s Heroes, but I can’t imagine any scenario where they could beat the Guild Headquarters’ staff or Lousse and the others, even if I had been summoned as a regular Hero. Is it that they would eventually grow stronger?

Shouta continued, “I can tell everything from your reaction... But... seriously? We were trained by the soldiers there, but the training mostly consisted of drills and mock battles, not allowing us to level up through real combat. Since some of us got impatient with the lack of real action, we complained to the government, which is how we ended up being sent to this academy.”

“I see.”

Wow, that sounds nice. I don't regret meeting Saria and Al, but if it hadn't been for them, I would have wanted to train safely like you guys did. I didn't enjoy battling for my life in that desolate forest! I can't even count how many times I nearly died! To think you guys were actually being looked after... Wishing for real combat seems odd to me. It's scary and painful.

Though giving up safe training conditions... that requires courage, doesn't it?

“When we actually arrived at this school, there were only a handful of people stronger than us,” Shouta explained. “That ended up inflating our egos... but then our confidence was shattered. Now, most of the Heroes just want to go home, but with the armlets and everything, it seemed hopeless.”

“Really...?” I said, surprised. *On Earth, I was always surrounded by people stronger than me. Now, the Heroes' spirits are broken, even though they haven't lost anything tangible... How complicated.*

“So, they want to go home, and that's why they're not participating in the school festival?” I asked.

Shouta nodded. “That's right.”

“Um... I heard that other classes of Heroes have started planning their activities for the festival...” Beatrice said, joining the conversation.

“Is that so?” Shouta asked, surprised.

“Yes. It's still a festival after all... Everyone wants to enjoy it,” Beatrice replied.

“Is it even possible to not participate?” Saria queried, smiling. “After all, like Beatrice said, it *is* a school festival.”

“That's right! Sure, there have been scary moments, but when it's time to have fun, we should enjoy ourselves to the fullest!” I exclaimed.

I looked at Saria for agreement, and she nodded with a smile. *Exactly. We're not dead, and if an opponent is stronger, what can you do?*

Ah, well, technically, maybe I had died?

Seeing my reaction, Shouta and the others' eyes widened, then broke into wry smiles.

"You're still the same, aren't you?" Kannazuki-senpai asked, amusement in her voice.

"Is that true...? Well, that's fine. Listen, if we don't do something, the Heroes will end up being the only ones without something to present."

"Right. It might be difficult, but let's discuss it again together."

"I think that's a good idea."

I nodded at Kannazuki-senpai's words. *If it's the serious Kannazuki-senpai, she'll probably manage something.*

"Sei-chan! Come on, cook for me!" Airin exclaimed, her eyes alive with excitement.

"Master! Me too! Please cook for me as well!" Louise chimed in, her voice sweet and endearing.

Airin, you're still going on about that, huh? I thought with a chuckle.

Chapter 6: The Unchanging Her

After my shocking reunion with Shouta and the others in the Home EC room, Kannazuki-senpai left to discuss the school festival activities with the Heroes once again. Having managed to deal with Shouta and his friends' armlets, I felt relieved.

Agnos and his group still had to finish their tests before the school festival. For this reason, Beatrice-san was tutoring them, and I had gone to grab some teaching materials.

"I still haven't fully grasped the layout of this school, but I'm pretty sure it was this way," I muttered to myself. The materials were supposedly kept in a place I rarely visited, and I felt a slight unease.

"—! —!"

"Huh?"

I heard women arguing.

"What's going on? I can't make out what they're saying..."

It was clear this wasn't a calm discussion.

It's coming from this direction.

As I headed toward the source of the conflict, I found myself going to a secluded area, under a staircase.

What are they doing here? Curious, I peered around the corner to see what was happening—and there was Hino Youko, surrounded by three female students.

"Hey, can you not interfere? We have business with that girl over there," one of the them yelled out.

"What kind of business?!" Hino replied. "The kind that resorts to violence?!"

“What if it does? It’s none of your business, is it?”

“It’s none of my business...? As if I can just stay quiet! I know everyone’s frustrated, but you can’t take it out on other kids!” Hino said.

“What? Seriously, this is so annoying. What’s even the point?”

“Is this girl getting carried away just because she thinks she’s got a pretty face?”

“Hey! Should we just do that this time?”

“Yeah, let’s beat her up here and make her our slave.”

“?!”

Behind Hino stood another girl with a frightened expression. It seemed Hino was protecting her.

Seeing this scene, I began to reminisce.

Hino hasn’t changed a bit. And I’m glad about that.

I used to always be the one needing help on Earth, but now, maybe I could...

“Hey, what are you doing?” I called out.

“Huh?”

When I spoke to the three girls, one of them turned around, clearly annoyed.
She looks so unfriendly!

“Who are you?”

“I’m a teacher at this school—”

“Yeah, don’t care. Why don’t you just back off?”

Demanding information and then dismissing me? Girls are scary!

“I can’t do that. Because, you know, this looks like a problem.”

“So, what? What does that have to do with you?”

“Do you even know who we are?” one of the other girls said.

Nope, I have no idea.

“Just because you’re a teacher doesn’t mean you can interfere with us. We’re Heroes.”

“Exactly. Scram,” commanded one.

The three girls quickly lost interest in me and turned their gazes back to Hino and the other girl. Without any hesitation, they raised their arms to strike— “!”

“Come on, stop the violence!” I said, grabbing one of them by the arm.

“What?! Hey, let go! You’re disgusting!” she exclaimed.

“That hurts, you know?!” I said, taken aback. *I wash my hands after using the restroom, and I haven’t touched anything dirty. What a terrible accusation.*

Upon my attempt to restrain one of them, they all stepped back and glared at me intensely.

“Hey, shouldn’t we sue him for sexual harassment? This is seriously the worst,” one of them said with a sneer.

“Oh, I should have taken a photo of that other guy earlier,” another girl said.

“That’s okay. We can just take a compromising photo of this guy now to blackmail him,” the third girl remarked.

Oh... I thought, taken aback by their hostility. Are girls normally this scary? Or have I just been desensitized by my experiences with senpai and the others? No, these girls are definitely a different breed altogether.

“Here’s your punishment for opposing us Heroes. You don’t even have human rights anymore,” one of the girls declared, her voice cold and menacing.

My human rights taken away by someone I just met... I thought, incredulous. I’m used to not getting my way, but this is not okay.

“Let’s knock this one down first, and then you’re next,” the girl said, her eyes fixed on Hino, who tensed up in response.

“Just go to sleep now!”

How violent can they get?

Not waiting another moment, the girl swung her fist toward my face.

“Yikes?! What? Why—” I stammered as I swiftly dodged out of the way.

Wow... No mercy, huh?

One of the girls attempted to circle around and block off my escape, but her fist accidentally struck another girl’s face, sending her sprawling.

“Isn’t she your friend? That looked really painful just now...” I commented.

“Y-Youuuuuu!”

Knocked to the ground and bleeding from her nose, the girl screamed, “What the hell are you doing?!”

She righted herself and then charged at her attacker with a furious expression.

“Ah, that wasn’t on purpose—”

“That doesn’t matter! You hit my face... Take this!”

She retaliated with her own punch, and the cycle continued, both of them reeling from the blows.

For the sake of clarity, I’ll refer to the girl who punched first as Female Student A, the one who got hit will be Female Student B, and the one watching will be Female Student C. Perfect.

Before I knew it, Female Student A and B had forgotten about me and Hino.

“I’ve always hated you! Why do I have to be bossed around by someone like you?!”

“Shut up! I hate you too! Die!”

Wow... their language is harsh... There’s no pretense left at all...

As I was taken aback by the intense fight between Female Student A and B, Female Student C, looking worried, tried to intervene.

“Hey, stop it! There’s no need for us to be fighting.”

“What?! What are you acting all high and mighty for?”

“Ouch?! ”

How unsympathetic!

Even Female Student C, who had been just an observer, got pulled into the fray, and Hino and I were bewildered.

Hmm...

“For now, come over here,” I said, trying to steer Hino and the other girl away from the chaos.

“Uh, yes... Thank you.” The two of them made their way over to me.

“Now we should be fine. Go ahead, now’s your chance.”

“Thank you! Um... thank you for helping me too!” the rescued girl said.

“Uh? Oh... well, I just did what anyone would do!”

The girl Hino had been protecting bowed multiple times and then quickly left the scene.

For some reason, Hino chose to stay.

“Aren’t you going to leave too?”

“Yes, but... Those girls are in the same class as me... Could we maybe do something to stop them?”

She’s even concerned about the people who just tried to hit her? She’s really something.

But for me to stop this... No, that’s impossible. It’s too risky.

Is this somehow my fault? But I had to dodge, or I would have been hit! Female Student B was there by sheer accident.

As I pondered possible solutions, I inadvertently muttered, “If only Kannazuki-senpai were here, she might be able to handle this...”

“Did someone call me?!”

“Where did you pop up from?!”

“What?! The student council president?!”

To my surprise, Kannazuki-senpai had appeared. It made no sense—I had just said it! She wasn’t here a moment ago, was she? Where did she even come from?! Hino looked just as shocked as I felt.

Ignoring our surprised expressions, Kannazuki-senpai sighed as she surveyed the mess before her.

“Ah... These girls have been causing trouble among the Hero group lately.”

Without hesitation, Kannazuki-senpai walked toward the brawling students.

How is she planning to resolve this? I'm sure that as the student council president, she'll handle it smoothly and coolly— With a single word, she seemed poised to bring an unexpected resolution to the chaos.

“Sleep!” To my surprise, Kannazuki-senpai slammed all three girls into the wall with a single blow. The impact left them sprawled out on the ground, unconscious.

“Whoa! More violence?!”

She casually grabbed their legs and started dragging them away. “I’ll take care of these girls.”

“Ah, yes, of course.”

“See you then.”

I half expected her to say something else to me, but Kannazuki-senpai simply went on her way with the girls in tow. Instead, she muttered to herself, “If I leave now, they’ll see me as a competent woman who gets the job done. Plus, Seiichi-kun will be puzzled by how different I’m acting... Perfect!”

You know I heard all that, right?

As I watched Kannazuki-senpai depart, leaving chaos in her wake, Hino approached me.

“Um...”

“Ah, what is it?”

“I just... wanted to say thanks for helping!”

“What? No, I didn’t really do anything... It was more like they started fighting among themselves, and then Kannazuki-senpai stopped them.”

“Even so, I was really grateful when you spoke up. So, thank you.”

Hino bowed politely, a gesture that felt very much in her character.

Honestly, I hadn't done much... But it was typical of Hino to appreciate even a small gesture.

Then it struck me.

Could it be that Hino, like Kannazuki-senpai, wears an armlet indicating her involvement in something bigger? But with my face hidden, she doesn't know who I am... Do I even remember her correctly? And even if I do, it's not like Hino and I were particularly close back then.

Having decided to say something, I acted as though it was pure coincidence as I pointed at Hino's armlet.

"That armlet..."

"Yeah? Oh, this? It's a special armlet that the people of the Kaizell Empire gave to us Heroes. It's supposed to enhance our strength... Quite amazing, isn't it?"

"Interesting... Do you think I could take a closer look? Mystical items like that really interest me."

"Sure, you can look. Ah... but since I put this armlet on, I couldn't take it off... Is it okay if it stays on my arm like this?"

"Yeah, that's fine."

Hino, unsuspecting, allowed me to inspect the armlet closely. My Acting skill was proving to be invaluable here, steering the interaction smoothly despite my inner discomfort at the necessity of the deception.

As I gently touched the armlet, I secretly activated my Abraham Lincoln skill.

Suddenly, the armlet slipped off and fell to the ground.

"What?! How did the armlet..."

"It looks like the whole unremovable part wasn't exactly right."

"Huh? What? But I also heard it was non-removable...? And I tried so many times, and it never came off. I thought that was just how it was..."

As Hino kept staring in confusion, I quickly reshaped the armlet to its original form and reattached it to her wrist. “Here you go, back to normal.”

“Sorry that this caused you a bit of confusion...”

“No, that’s okay. That was a surprise for me as well... and since it’s back to normal now, I guess it’s probably fine.”

Hino responded with a gentle smile. “Ah! I have class soon, so I’d better go. Thank you so much for everything!”

She bowed deeply once more and then hurried off.

I let out a sigh of relief. *So, does this mean I’ve protected someone else from the domination of the Kaizell Empire...?*

Feeling a weight lifted with this concern resolved, I remembered my original purpose. I, too, quickly headed off to grab my teaching materials.

Chapter 7: Fitting Room Rehearsal

“Hey, can you grab those nails over there for me?”

“Put that sign over there, please!”

“Did you apply to use the classroom? Hmm? Not yet?”

“Does anyone know where the teacher is?”

As the day of the school festival approached, every class seemed busy preparing their booths. I was involved in the preparations, too, having gone to request additional desks and chairs for our classroom. I was in the middle of transporting these and other materials.

“Everything’s going just as Barney planned. Everyone’s so lively.”

“Mmm. They’re all spirited.”

Origa, who was helping me, also managed a slight smile as she carried ingredients for the upcoming café.

“By the way, are the Heroes participating?”

“Ah... come to think of it, I haven’t seen them around at all since we last spoke.”

In Origa’s case, it had been since the day Kannazuki-senpai and the others stormed into the Home EC room. I hadn’t seen the Heroes around since bumping into Hino in the hallway either.

It was concerning, but Kannazuki-senpai said she’d handle it, so it should be fine. If only she weren’t such a weirdo, she’d be really reliable.

After walking past and observing a few other classes, I reached our classroom.

“I’m back—”

“Ah, Seiichi! Look, look!”

“Wha—”

The moment I entered the classroom, there was Saria—in a short nurse outfit—striking a sexy pose with an “ufufun.”

The sight was so shocking that I froze in place.

“I’m... just too cute, it’s unbearable. Tee-hee,” she commented as I stared.

“No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! No, that’s not why I was staring!” I exclaimed. “I was just stunned for a second because my brain couldn’t process it fast enough!”

How did we even end up with a gorilla in a nurse outfit? Why couldn’t it have been a human?!

I looked around the classroom for an explanation, but oddly, I could only see the other guys. There was a curtain that had been set up in the classroom. The girls must have been behind it.

“I... I have no idea what’s going on...” I said, confused.

“The girls are changing into their costumes behind that curtain, but Saria looked like that from the moment she appeared,” Agnos explained, grimacing as he responded to my questioning gaze. Blud looked away, and I thought, *No, there can’t be such an absurd reason, right?!*

Goria grabbed my shoulder with surprising strength. “Seiichi.”

“Yeah?”

“This will, um, ‘seduce’ Seiichi,” she said, her grip on my shoulder tightening.

“Feels more like I’m physically being assaulted here?!” I exclaimed, my shoulder creaking under her grip. I mean, her thought processes as a gorilla were just too different from her human ones, and I couldn’t get used to it! Yet, there was a part of me that thought even this Saria was kind of cute... I must have been terminal.

“Saria-oneechan, it suits you,” Origa said, trying to sound calm.

“Thank you, Origa-chan. Ah, Origa-chan, you have a costume too, don’t you? Let’s go change,” Saria said, smiling gently, and then took Origa-chan behind the curtain.

Strange. For a moment, the nurse outfit seemed unusually fitting on her. I guess I'm done for.

"Ah, the boys changed too?" I asked.

"Yes, but it seems we're all in butler outfits," Leon said, and I noticed that Agnos and the others were all dressed in the same attire.

Though the costumes were essentially identical, each of them had added their own flair. Agnos wore his butler costume in casual disarray, while Blud wore his in pristine condition. Berard had rolled up the sleeves of his jacket, and Leon was the only one wearing a proper bow tie compared to the others' string ties.

Hmm... seeing the boys like this, even including Agnos, they are very handsome. They look great. I'm not sure, but I think these four could draw the attention of all the girls in the school.

As I marveled at the sight of the four, the curtain that had been closed was suddenly pulled open. "Everyone, we're done changing!" Saria announced, still in her gorilla form. The girls shyly emerged.

"Don't stare too much... I'll kill you, okay?!" Helen said, blushing and glaring in her maid outfit.

"Hey, that's a bit extreme, isn't it?!" I replied. *If she threatened to "kill" someone every time they looked at them while she was serving, all the customers would end up "dead."*

"Well, come on, it's fine. You look cute, Helen-chan," I said, trying to reassure her.

"But, still..." she trailed off.

"You're going to have to stand in front of the customers like this anyway, better to just accept it," said Rachel. She was dressed in a nun's outfit, which suited her quite well.

"Ugh... that's true, but, oh! Instead, I can just cook—" Helen started to say.

"You're planning to kill the customers with your cooking?" Rachel asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Are you really going there?!" Helen exclaimed.

Sorry, Helen. I agree with Rachel... After all, if there's nothing on the plate, the customers can't eat. At least make sure you can make something edible before you say that again. Although the answer will still be no.

"Hah... this is quite an interesting costume. It really shines a spotlight on me," Rachel said.

"Um, mine might be worse than Helen's, don't you think?!" Irene asked as she swept back her hair. She was dressed as a policewoman. Meanwhile, Flora, wearing a bunny girl outfit, nervously looked around for something to cover herself with.

Flora... Yes. It's refreshing to see her, who everyone usually thinks of as more masculine, in a distinctly feminine outfit. I don't know what she thinks of it herself, though.

"Claudia used to dress like a man all the time, but I never thought I'd be doing it..." Louise said, dressed in the same butler outfit as the men and looking very smart with her straight posture.

"This outfit... It closely resembles the traditional attire of the Eastlands," Routier observed, wearing a traditional Japanese kimono with a hairstyle to match.

"As someone new to uniforms," she continued, "I'm realizing there are so many types of clothing in the world that I didn't know about!"

It had been a while since I'd heard about the Eastlands, but they seemed to be quite similar to feudal Japan. *I'd like to visit one day*, I thought wistfully.

Zora, who had been sealed in a dungeon until now, appeared gleeful in her attire as a flight attendant. *Considering her past, even small changes must feel new and exciting to her. Well, any attire from another world might seem fresh to anyone.*

More than anything, seeing Zora genuinely smiling makes me glad we brought her out of the dungeon. I hope she keeps discovering and enjoying more pleasant things.

"Do I really have to wear something like this?!" Beatrice asked, now in a pirate outfit. *Since she usually dresses very neatly, this wild look is... Yeah!*

“Hey! What kind of outfit is this?! It’s fluffy but the skirt is way too short...!” Al exclaimed, blushing furiously in a Santa outfit and desperately trying to keep her miniskirt down.

“Hmm... this is quite easy to move in... Rather, it’s easy to kick in,” Irene said about her police uniform.



Next to them, as if inspired, Lulune was kicking a leg in her cheongsam that had a daringly high slit, completely unguarded. *Hey, you can see... Wait, she's wearing underwear, right? It'll be fine!*

Origa-chan, dressed as a charming shrine maiden, admired her outfit with keen interest. As everyone had now changed into their costumes, the level of cosplay had reached an incredibly high standard, particularly with so many attractive girls present.

"Wowwww! Amazing! Niichan, I'm super impressed!" Agnos exclaimed, visibly excited by the women's appearances.

"Well, it's quite fitting, isn't it? Hmm," Berard said, reacting in his usual manner.

"Everyone looks appropriate for the occasion," Blud added, also reacting calmly.

"So beautiful! Oh, I'm sorry! For someone like me to say that... It's out of character, isn't it?! Sorry! Please forgive me!" Leon said, blushing and looking down.

Yeah, I get why it's hard to know where to look! I've been struggling with where to rest my eyes too!

"How about it? Everyone looks beautiful, right?" Saria said. She proceeded to line up beside everyone and strike a sexy pose. *Well, not really. Saria, you're a bit of an outlier.*

Ah, but looking at Saria this way calms me down! This is the first time I've been grateful for the gorilla form! Thank you, Gorio! My sanity is preserved!

While I mentally stabilized myself, Lousse was looking over everyone's costumes. Suddenly, her gaze locked onto me.

"By the way... I haven't heard the full story, but is the master a Hero?"

"What?" I replied, surprised.

"I'm curious too. He said he could already use Holy Magic when he learned Demon Lord Magic in the dungeon, and then there was the tasting session the Heroes interrupted..."

Come to think of it, Helen and the others knew, but I hadn't properly explained it to Lousse and the rest. We just stormed through the dungeon, and then Kannazuki-senpai and her group came roaring in and left just as quickly...

"Hmm... I wasn't summoned as a Hero, so I'm not a Hero, but I am from the same world as the Heroes. So, I'm an otherworlder."

"I see... Are these clothes normal in your world then?" Lousse asked.

"I mean, not exactly *normal*, I guess. Of course, there are people who wear these for work, though."

Seemingly satisfied with my explanation, Lousse went back to examining everyone's outfits. The policewoman's outfit was the most authentic, but the rest were more Japanese-styled... though modified for cosplay.

"So, are we done with the fitting today?" I asked. "The menu is decided, and the rest we'll only know by doing it on the day..."

"What are you talking about? We're not done yet," Saria replied.

Not done? Is there something else we need to get ready? I twisted my head back and forth in confusion when suddenly someone grabbed my shoulder again firmly. *Oh, what?*

"Seiichi needs to change too."

"... Eh?! *I'm* supposed to change?!"

"Of course! Even *I've* changed, and I'm not the homeroom teacher! You're changing too!" Saria exclaimed, her grip on my shoulder tightening.

"Come on, Master! This way, please!" Al said. She and the others had already surrounded me, leaving me no escape. *This is ridiculous!*

"Wait, just a minute! I'll change! I'll change myself?! So, don't drag me! Don't follow me?!" I pleaded.

"It's okay. We'll be gentle, right?" Saria said, her voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Gentle? What exactly are you planning to do?!" I asked in desperation.

"It'll be fine, yeah? It'll be fine, yeah!" Al cooed, somehow sounding both cheerful and menacing.

“No, stop itttttttttttttttttttttt!” I shouted, but it was in vain. Like a dress-up doll, I ended up being paraded out in a variety of outfits by Saria and the others.

Actually, I found out later that Saria made all these outfits solely based off my descriptions. Incredibly impressive!

Chapter 8: The School Festival Begins

“Welcome, welcome! How about some Lequia bird skewers?” a vendor called out.

“Let me divine your future... Hmm?! Oh, I see an aspect related to death...?!” a fortune teller said, gazing into a crystal ball.

“Whether you win or lose, no complaints! How about trying your luck with a draw just once?” a game stall owner exclaimed, inviting passersby.

The Barbodel Magic Academy was hosting its school festival, planned by Barnabus to lift the spirits of students who had suffered emotional scars from the Cult of the Wicked One’s attack during the Clash of Classes competition. In the aftermath, many students had returned home, and some parents were distrustful of the academy. Despite this, the students enthusiastically ran their stalls and enjoyed the festival in their own ways.

Amid this, one class stood out—2nd Year Class F, located at the edge of the main school building. Several voices could already be heard, all of them praising this class...

“Hey, did you go... to Class F’s booth?!”

“Yeah, I did! Isn’t it insanely cool?!”

“That class is on another level!”

“Damn! Is it all about the looks... Just looks?!”

“WELCOME!!!” Agnos, Blud, Leon, and Berard greeted in unison, charming the female students.

“KYAAAAAA!” a group of girls squealed in delight.

Class F’s booth, run by the male students, was a cosplay café, and it was drawing a huge crowd.

Moreover, since Seiichi had previously informed everyone about the details of their cosplay costumes, those who could act were fully embracing their roles as they served their customers.

Agnos, his face slightly flushed, handed a menu to a dazed-looking girl who sat at one of the tables. "Here, take the menu. Can't you see the line behind you? So, try to make it quick!"

"You idiot, she's a customer. Watch your language," another boy scolded.

"What did you say?!" Agnos retorted.

"Ignore this fool. Just pick something from the menu," the boy advised the girl.

Agnos's rough demeanor matched his disheveled butler outfit, and even his brusque attitude was surprisingly popular with the female students.

On the other hand, Blud wore his butler uniform impeccably. Despite his mixed commoner heritage, his noble demeanor and good looks caused all the female students to gaze at him adoringly.

"Uh, um! Here's the menu! Uh... so... which one would you like?!" Leon asked nervously.

"Um... I'll have... Leon, please!" a girl replied.

"Eh? Eeeeeeh?! Me?! No, that won't do! Oh, sorry?! I shouldn't have talked back! Please forgive me!" Leon exclaimed, visibly flustered.

Leon continued to serve as best he could, but his discomfort attracted a dangerous type of attention. Some students were intentionally making him uncomfortable, relishing in his squirming to an unsettling extent.

Fortunately, Berard emerged protectively, his sharp gaze and large well-trained physique commanding authority. "Please don't be too harsh on Leon," he said, his gentle aura softening his appearance.

"Berard!" Leon exclaimed.

"Are you all right?"

Berard's mature presence provided a calming influence in the lively atmosphere of the cosplay café, making him popular among the female students.

The chaotic scene continued to unfold as some of the girls, nosebleeds in tow, avidly watched the exchanges between Agnos and Blud, and between Leon and Berard. Despite the chaos, Agnos and his group managed to garner significant support from many female students, greatly boosting Class F's sales.

As the day proceeded, the staff had a changeover in shifts, and it was Helen and her friends' turn to serve. The clientele quickly transformed. The classroom, previously overflowing with girls, was now bustling with a multitude of boys.

"Welcome... Mas... Master..." Helen greeted her customers with visible veins on her forehead and a strained expression. Dressed in a maid outfit, she tried to muster a smile for the successive waves of male students arriving.

"Helen-chan, that won't do," Rachel scolded her. "You need to smile more naturallyyy."

"But, but—" Helen protested.

"No buts. You're a maid now, so you must serve our flock properly," Rachel replied. *Maybe she's taking her nun role a bit too seriously,* I thought.

"Serve our flock?! You know... this is supposed to be a café, right?! Do you get that?!" Helen asked, exasperated.

"I do get iiit," Rachel said, prompting confessions instead of handing out menus—turning the café into something quite different.

"Then why do I have to dress like this?! You should at least dress the same way, Rachel!"

"That's impossiiible. I'm a nun, after aaall... Oh, hellooo. Lost laaambs. What brings you heeere? Is it confession tiime?"

"I told you, this is a café!"

Meanwhile, at another table, male students with hearts in their eyes continued to gaze adoringly at Irene and the others.

"Beautiful..."

“What is this place... Heaven? When did I die?!”

“I don’t care about graduating... I just want her to step on me...”

While the rest of the school had once looked down on Class F, the attitudes of most softened significantly after the interclass competition. This shift was largely due to Class F’s remarkable performance against Class S and their immediate action against the Servants of the Cult of the Wicked One when no one else moved.

Although some students still harbored resentment toward Class F, those who had warmed up to them were particularly enamored, not just with Irene, but also with the other beautiful girls of the class.

In the face of their avid gazes, Irene nonchalantly flipped her hair, fully aware of the attention she commanded. “Hmph... Well, it’s only natural considering I’m perfect and beautiful. Oh... how sinful of me. Should I arrest myself perhaps?” She playfully twirled a toy handcuff that had come with her policewoman costume, a move she’d learned from Seiichi.

Beside the self-indulgent Irene, Flora, her face flushed red, was desperately trying to manage her serving duties. “I-Irene?! Could you please help me with the service?”

The boys surrounding them couldn’t help but compliment Flora, dressed as a bunny girl.

“Wowww! Flora-chan, you’re so cute!”

“What a provocative outfit... Outrageous... Outrageous, but I like it!”

Flora blushed at the unfamiliar attention. “Why do I have to wear this?! Aren’t there cuter girls who would suit this better?! Like Saria-san or Lulune-san!”

“What are you talking about?” Irene retorted earnestly. “It suits you perfectly. I won’t let you deny your beauty.”

“I-Irene...” Flora protested.

Irene gave Flora a serious look. “But I can’t allow you to outshine me. I’m arresting you.”

“That’s just unreasonable!” Flora exclaimed, but seconds later she found herself handcuffed—a mischievous trick that left her flustered. Despite the confusion and embarrassment, Helen and her group managed to get through their shift.

After them, Lousse and others took over the service. Dressed in her butler attire, Lousse was immensely popular, especially with enthusiastic female patrons. One of them stopped her to ask for a recommendation.

“Excuse me! Which one would you recommend, sir?” she asked.

“With all these people lined up, it’s hard to stay in one place long, but I’ll gladly help,” Lousse replied, never rudely dismissing any of the female students due to her naturally gentle disposition. “How about this cake set? The cake comes with a tea that pairs perfectly with its flavors.”

“Then... I’ll have that, please!” she replied.

“Very well, miss,” Lousse said, offering a subtle smile after a graceful bow.

Her smile caused the female students and other patrons to blush and swoon.

“Oh? Are you all right?” someone asked, concerned.

Meanwhile, despite her initial reluctance, Beatrice fully embraced her role as a pirate, though her cheeks flushed red with embarrassment. “What are you waiting for, huh? Make up your mind... or you’ll end up as shark bait!” she said, trying to sound fierce.

“Captain! Take all my money, pleeeeeease!” a student called out playfully.

As Beatrice continued her role as a pirate, the male students were getting carried away, offering her more than the menu prices in a frenzied bid to hand over their “treasure.”

“What are you saying?! Take my money instead!”

“Don’t be stupid! It’s me who’s giving her all my wealth! From today, I’m penniless, aaaaaah!”

Under normal circumstances, the real Beatrice would have immediately corrected them and accepted only the required amount. However, caught up in

her role and embarrassed, her judgment was slightly off and this led her to accepting the extra money without further question.

“All right... Who else wants their money taken by me?!”

“Me, pleeeeeeeeeeease!”

It was an unusual situation, but thanks to the overwhelming enthusiasm of the male students, and their satisfaction with their actions, nobody was displeased.

Meanwhile, Zora, dressed as a flight attendant, and Routier, clad in a traditional Japanese kimono, cooperated to manage each order methodically.

“Um, this order goes to that table... and this one over there... ah! My head is spinning!”

“Calm down. It’s okay, we’ll do it together.”

The sight of the two working together to serve the food drew warm looks from both boys and girls.

“Next is that table over there!”

“Hey, don’t run! It’s dangerous, okay?”

“Oh, you’re right! But it’s so much fun...”

“Yeah, I’ve never had an experience like this before. It’s interesting.”

Having both lived in unique circumstances, Zora and Routier found the concept of a cosplay café fresh and enjoyable—it showed in the especially heartwarming service they delivered.

As the shift changed again, Saria and her team’s turn to serve arrived. However, there was an unexpected twist.

“Welcome!”

“Whaaaaat?! Saria?! Turn into a human! A human!”

Saria, unexpectedly in gorilla form while still dressed in her nurse outfit, was stopped abruptly by Altria. Reluctantly, she transformed back into her human form. However, the customers had already caught a glimpse of her gorilla state, and everyone frantically rubbed their eyes in disbelief.

“Uh, did my eyes just play tricks on me?”

“What a coincidence. Same here.”

“Right? I thought I saw a buff monster in a cute outfit just now... Must have been my imagination, right?”

“Absolutely! How could that cute outfit look good on... It must have been our imagination!”

Shockingly, Goria had somehow managed to pull off the nurse outfit, which added to the men’s confusion. But soon after she transformed into a beautiful redhead, everyone stopped questioning it. They decided her current cuteness was all that mattered.

“All right! A shortcake, got it!”

Back in her human form, Saria charmed customer after customer with her infectious smile. And it wasn’t just the men who were enchanted, the women were also captivated by her cuteness.

“Ugh, why do I have to dress like this... If I have to do it, why not in front of Seichi?!”

Meanwhile, Altria, blushing in her miniskirt Santa outfit, continued serving at the request of the students of Class F. Unlike Helen or Beatrice, who shared similar feelings but managed to play their roles, Altria struggled because she wasn’t quite familiar with the concept of Santa and was entangled in her complex maidenly emotions.

“Hmph, is that an omurice? Leave it to me, I’ll eat it right now,” Lulune said.

Origa stared. “You dummy. It’s not food meant for gluttons.”

Lulune, clad in a cheongsam, was a constant challenge as she tried to devour every dish meant for the customers. Somehow, Origa managed to keep Lulune’s insatiable appetite in check. Lulune kept trying to sneak bites of other people’s meals whenever she found an opportunity, but Origa persevered.

At the same time, she continued to serve the guests earnestly. Her shrine maiden attire, coupled with her diligent efforts, warmed the hearts of all patrons, regardless of gender. Her commitment not only maintained the flow of

the café but also enhanced the festive spirit, creating a welcoming and enjoyable experience for everyone attending the school festival.



As Lulune continued her joyful rampage through the food, there was an unexpected turn of events. Customers whose meals were devoured by Lulune ended up being charmed by her blissful eating expressions, and they generously began offering more dishes to her. Interestingly, she focused solely on enjoying the culinary delights, showing no thoughts for the customers, which added a whimsical tone to the entire scene.

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As I strode through the entrance, dressed in an outfit that wouldn't seem out of place on a dark, brooding nobleman, I couldn't help but grin. It was a haughty smirk, sure, but it held a spark that captivated the attention of everyone who looked my way. Those who knew me well would have laughed—this was a complete turnaround from my usual self. But here I was, like a prince from a fairy tale, serving guests with a charm and grace I never knew I possessed.

This whole getup was all thanks to Saria and Altria. Saria had poured her heart into the costume, especially considering how she had made it while in her gorilla form. It must have taken ages, and seeing her dedication had spurred me on. Maybe it was that, or maybe it was subconsciously channeling the Acting skill I'd picked up on my last date with Altria, but for some reason, I slipped right into the role.

“So, have you decided on your order?”

“Ah, ahiii?! Th-Th-Th-This one, please?!”

My charm was on full display as I gently grasped the trembling hand of a girl repeatedly jabbing at the menu, offering a gentle smile.

“Very well, Your Highness.”

The effect was dramatic. Every woman in the room was drowning in the ocean of the prince's presence.

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As I continued my flawless customer service, I suddenly turned toward the sound of loud voices, only to find a terrifying sight.

“Seiichi-kuuuuuuun!”

“Sei-chan, Sei-chan, Sei-chan, Sei-chan!”

There, approaching me drooling with noses bleeding, were Kannazuki-senpai and Airin—a frighteningly enthusiastic duo!

Okay, they're really cute, but they need to control themselves... This is ruining the vibe. They were metaphorically shedding their skins, and it was a scene that begged for self-censorship.

At least they maintained enough composure to wait their turn and properly join the queue at the booth. I had learned before the festival started that the Heroes, unfortunately, couldn't decide on an activity to hold. Instead, they opted to participate as festival goers, and it seemed that Kannazuki-senpai had specifically targeted the time slot when I would be serving. Their dedication was frightening—appreciated, but frightening.

“Seiichi-kun, Seiichi-kun, Seiichi-kun...!”

Their intense, bloodshot eyes fixated on me as they repeated my name, filling me with an urge to flee right then and there. Sure, because of who I was, I shouldn't have had anything to fear! Yet, having them mutter my name nonstop was disturbing—and I wasn't just thinking of myself. This could be very annoying or even frightening for other guests.

At that moment, I was clad in a regal outfit that Saria had poured her heart and soul into making and managed fine with my acquired Acting skill. If I addressed Kannazuki-senpai and Airin in my usual manner, it might disappoint a lot of the customers.

Resolute, I activated my Acting skill, immersing myself in the role. Approaching Kannazuki-senpai and Airin, who were still fervently chanting my name, I gently placed a finger on each of their lips, silencing them. They froze, eyes wide in surprise.

“Please, be quiet. This is a place for dining, is it not? If you continue to be naughty... I may have to punish you,” I said with a measured, theatrical tone.

“Please doooooo!” they both shrieked in unison.

What on earth?! Why?! I cringed. And seriously, how cheesy was that line? Am I better off dead? I hate this café! Whose idea was this, anyway? Oh, right, it was mine!

Why would they want to be punished? Are they crazy? That wasn't effective at all! If anything, they just got louder!

My declaration not only escalated the fervor of Kannazuki-senpai and Airin but also sparked a wave of similar requests from other customers, who seemed intrigued by the idea of being “punished.” I was utterly bewildered by the unfolding chaos. *I'm surrounded by strange people!* I despaired.

I had no choice but to stifle my discomfort and continue using my Acting skill to navigate through the rest of my shift. All the while, I questioned the sanity of my surroundings, wondering how this school festival had taken a turn into the truly surreal.

Chapter 9: Fortune Telling Booth

After my shift ended, I moved to the green room where Saria and Al were also taking a break.

“Ah, Seiichi! Good job!” Saria greeted me with a smile.

“Yeah, good job,” Al added.

I shrugged off my cape and took a deep breath—before running over to the window as if to jump out.

“Phew... I think I’m going to go die for a bit!”

“Wait, wait, wait, wait!” Al rushed over, grabbing my shoulders to stop me.

“How could you smile while making such an outrageous comment?” she asked, incredulous.

“Al, let go! I can’t take it anymore, those cheesy lines... Aaaaargh! Just kill me!” I joked, exasperated.

“Calm down, you idiot! It’s not just you... I’m embarrassed too, so suck it up! And who could even kill you, anyway?” Al retorted, chuckling.

“True?!” I asked, surprised.

“Wait, really?” Saria added, raising an eyebrow.

Helen, who had been watching our exchange, widened her eyes in astonishment.

Dammit! I want to die and erase that embarrassing memory right now! Why does my body have to get in the way here of all places... Thanks for always being there for me! But really, you could hold back just a little, couldn’t you?

Even if I somehow ended up on death’s doorstep... it feels like I’d be rejected by heaven, hell, and even the Underworld. They’d say, “Ah, you, sorry but you don’t get to come here,” and I’d just keep on living. I’m not even surprised

anymore by stuff like that. But surely, I can die of old age, right? Please, let me at least be human enough for that!

My death having been prevented by Al, I started to settle down. “I guess I’ll just have to live with it...” I muttered. “Who was the one who suggested doing a cosplay café...? I need to punch them...”

“Seiichi,” everyone said in unison.

“Guh!” I landed a punch squarely on my own face. “Yeah, it’s all my fault.”

“Come on, it wasn’t that bad... You looked... cool, right?” Al said hopefully.

“Yeah, yeah, Seiichi, it really suited you!” Saria added, nodding in agreement.

“Al... Saria...” I looked at them, still feeling embarrassed.

Still, seeing the students smiling and enjoying themselves did make me happy. It was good to see a new side of Saria and the others... and in the end, I was satisfied.

After sighing again, I managed a wry smile. “Thanks, guys, you’re right. When you two put it that way, I can’t really say anything else...”

“Yeah! Let’s keep up the good work for the rest of the event!” Al exclaimed.

“All right, I guess I’ll go die inside a little more,” I joked.

Just as I was about to get back to work, Al and Saria drew my attention to the wider festival.

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“Wow... looking around, everyone’s really put a lot into their booths,” I said, impressed, as Saria and I toured the school festival.

“Yeah, hey, that looks delicious!” She pointed out some food on offer at the nearest booth, eyeing it closely.

Having somehow survived all my shifts despite the humiliation, I was now enjoying the festival with Saria. Al and a few others still had shifts left.

Entering the fortune telling tent was like stepping into another world. The room was dark, draped with black curtains, and sporadic purple lights created an eerie alien atmosphere.

“Ah, welcome, welcome to our fortune telling booth... Have a seat right over here, please...” A cloaked figure guided us. Saria and I fumbled our way through the dimly lit space and finally sat down in front of the most elaborately dressed person we’d seen so far that day. On the table in front of this person was a crystal ball, likely the medium for telling fortunes.

“Welcome. What shall I divine for you? The compatibility between you two? Your future? Or perhaps your essence?” the fortune teller asked, voice low and mysterious.

“Um...” I hesitated. There were so many options!

Saria excitedly raised her hand. “Yes! I’d like to know about our compatibility!”

“Saria?” I was a bit taken aback but amused by her enthusiasm.

“Hehe, I wonder what they’ll say—oh, Seiichi, what will you choose?”

What do I want to know...? I mused. Our compatibility and future felt somewhat predictable, but... *What could “essence” possibly mean in the context of fortune telling?*

“Well... maybe my essence? That one.” I decided with a nod, curiosity getting the better of me.

The robed figure nodded solemnly back. “All right... Got it. Then, let me first divine your compatibility, as the young lady requested!”

The crystal ball between us started to glow faintly under the mystical purple light.

Then, instead of using it, the mystic stranger reached out and placed two hands over our heads.

“KIEEEEEEEEE!” I yelped, startled.

“You’re not using the crystal?!” Saria exclaimed, surprised.

“I see it!” the fortune teller cried, with her eyes closed in concentration.

“That was quick?!” I added, still shaken.

The fortune teller began to speak excitedly. “The compatibility between you two is exceptional! In fact, I have never seen a pair so well matched before! Your future together is secure, and a bright destiny awaits you both! May your lives together be explosively joyful, you... *wonderful* souls!”

“Isn’t that a bit over the top?!” I exclaimed, unsure if we were being blessed or cursed. Also, had I detected a hint of jealousy in the fortune teller’s voice?

Yet, hearing that Saria and I were so compatible filled me with joy—a lot of joy, in fact. I found myself unconsciously glancing at her, while she looked back at me, blushing with a shy smile.

“Hehe... Looks like we’ll be together for a long time, huh!” Saria giggled, while her eyes sparkled.

“Yeah,” I agreed, feeling a strange mix of happiness and bewilderment at the odd but heartwarming fortune we had just received. The fortune teller’s peculiar method and the sudden proclamation might have been unconventional, but the result was welcome.



I realized once again that no matter what, I wanted to stay with Saria. Just being able to reaffirm that feeling made the trip here worthwhile.

“Umm!” The fortune teller coughed loudly a few times. “Could you please refrain from being so lovey-dovey here?!” This interruption brought us back to reality.

“Oh, s-sorry...” I mumbled, even though I didn’t think we were being that affectionate.

“Well, that’s fine... Now, let’s take a look at the essence of this young man here.”

“Please do,” I responded, bracing myself.

This time, without placing their hands over my head, the robed student just stared intently into my eyes. *Seriously, you’re not using crystal ball again? It’s right there, and it’s not small.*

“I see it!”

“Still not using it, huh...”

After a moment of studying my face, the fortune teller gasped and staggered backward.

“Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat?!”

“What are you?! It’s like... I don’t even know how to put it, but it’s crazy! You’re a walking embodiment of all the potentialities of a human, but you deviate from the norms of this world. No, that’s not right. You exist on a level that could be considered parallel or even superior to many worlds or dimensions?! I... It’s almost blasphemous to even compare! Ah, shit! My vocabulary fails me! Who can even explain this?! What am I divining here?! Are you not human?! Why am I even doing this at a school festival?!”

“Sorry?!” I wasn’t sure if I was being scolded or praised—or something else.

This casual fortune telling session was getting unnervingly accurate for a school festival.

“Anyway! It’s impossible to divine you any further. In fact, no one can divine you! Even a god... Hmm?! Even a god can’t understand you?! So, what the hell are you?!”

Saria and I exchanged glances, both bewildered.

Staying any longer seemed fruitless and possibly more confusing, so I paid for the session, and we quietly made our way out. Whatever had happened inside that tent, it was clear we had uncovered something beyond the ordinary—a mystery neither of us knew how to tackle.

Chapter 10: The Awakening of the Demon God

“My power is coming back to me. I can feel it!”

In the utter darkness, a solitary purple flame flickered into existence. Eerily wavering without wind, it possessed an alluring, sinister charm that was impossible to ignore.

“Just a little longer... Just a bit more. Soon, I shall be resurrected...” the flame whispered, its words laden with myriad emotions beyond the comprehension of any mortal.

This flame was the very deity venerated by the Cult of the Wicked One, a true god among gods. The thoughts of such divine beings were unfathomable to the humans they had created—insignificant pawns in the grand scheme of existence.

The Demon God harbored little interest in the sealed world and its inhabitants—an ideology unwittingly shared even by the members of the Cult of the Wicked One. It was ingrained in these humans that they should worship and obey their creators unquestioningly, and for a god, wiping out humanity’s existence was a trivial matter.

Currently, however, due to the seals, this deity’s ability to interfere with creatures was null. Yet, once the seals were broken, at the mere thought of “vanish,” it could obliterate not just the planet but entire universes.

“Gather, my Servants,” the flame quietly commanded, and numerous shadows like dark lights appeared around it. The shadows grew brighter, eventually taking on human forms, and they assembled, bowing their heads in reverence toward the purple flame.

Among these bowed figures, the man standing closest to the purple flame spoke up. “You called for us, My Lord?”

This smiling man was the same one who had gathered the Servants that attacked the Kingdom of Windberg. The Demon God nodded at his words but then realized something was amiss.

“Hmm? What of the other Servants? Why are they not with you?” it asked, its purple flame flickering with curiosity.

“I apologize. The other four are... up to their usual antics. Shall I forcibly bring them here?” the man replied, still smiling.

“No, that is unnecessary,” it replied. “Undoubtedly, they are serving my cause in their own ways. What’s important now is this... Rejoice, for my resurrection is imminent!”

The Servants all cheered, their faces alight with joy and excitement, for these words were the fulfillment of a long-awaited promise.

“Yes, my resurrection is near. You have served me well thus far,” the Demon God acknowledged, its purple flame dancing with pleasure.

“Such blessed fortune...!” the Servants exclaimed, their voices full of gratitude and devotion.

“Indeed. And now, I entrust you with the final task,” it continued, its voice dripping with malevolence.

“What would that be...?” the smiling man asked. His expression had deepened into something more sinister and eerie.

With a tone of satisfaction, the Demon God responded, “You have all acted on my behalf, sowing the Seeds of Calamity across this planet. Some, like Demioros, failed to sow these seeds due to his overconfidence and lost my power as a result. His plans were thwarted, and now nothing can be done about that. But others among you seem to have been more successful.”

The Servants were shocked to learn for the first time of Demioros’s loss of power, but none dared interrupt the Demon God.

“Some of you have planted these Seeds in the land, others in the hearts of people... Nurture them carefully. Then, when the time comes, unleash the final

disaster, and plunge this world into chaos. That will complete my resurrection—is that clear?” Its purple flame was now blazing with intensity.

“Yes!” All bowed deeper in acknowledgment of their dark mission, prepared to bring about the chaos that would herald their god’s return to power.

Then the smiling man, Yutis, raised his hand quietly, and the room fell into a tense silence.

“My Lord, there is something I need to report...” Yutis said, his voice low and measured.

“What is it?” the Demon God asked, its purple flame flickering with interest.

“Recently, Lordias and his team attacked a diplomatic meeting between the daughter of the Demon King and the human race in the Kingdom of Windberg. They tried to assassinate the demonkin princess. Lordias and his team used the monsters they had been leading in their invasion, but they were defeated by unexpected reinforcements from the Windberg side. Lordias, Lester, and Edmund have all perished.”

The Demon God’s flame danced with sudden intensity, a clear indication of its surprise. “What?”

The other Servants were visibly shocked by Yutis’s information, and one of them aggressively confronted him. “Hey, Yutis! What the hell are you talking about? We didn’t know anything about this!”

Yutis, however, his smile unwavering, continued to explain calmly, “I saw no need to report it. As I mentioned, the unexpected reinforcements... they were powerful enough to defeat Servants like Lordias in combat. What’s more, there’s absolutely no information about this formidable new adversary.”

He further elaborated, “If an entity like this had existed before, there at least should have been rumors about them. The absence of rumors indicates that rash actions would be unwise. This unknown force is certainly a concern, but I concluded that rather than facing it head on, focusing our efforts on restoring Our Lord’s power would ultimately be more beneficial. If we would possibly be defeated again after sending more Servants, wouldn’t it be faster and more

certain to just hasten Our Lord's resurrection and have him obliterate any opposition?"

The Servant who had been confronting Yutis was unhappy with the explanation, but he unclenched his fists and stepped back. "Hey, you... What do you take our Demon God for? To trouble Our Lord with such trivial things—"

Surprisingly, said lord interrupted. "It's fine. Yutis is correct; once I am resurrected, no being will pose a threat. It will all end the same if I simply obliterate them."

The angered Servant nodded. "Well, if the Demon God himself says so..."

A sudden interrogation by the Demon God, questioning why Yutis—a Servant with unique abilities to traverse past, present, and future—hadn't intervened, intensified the atmosphere. The purple flame flared up, exerting a pressure that felt like it could crush everyone present. The Servants desperately bowed low under its immense weight and began gasping for air, as even breathing had become difficult.

Yutis, though strained under the pressure, managed to muster a response. "My Lord... with all due respect... I managed to retrieve Lordias and his team just in the nick of time. And it was during this retrieval that I encountered the very matter I wished to report."

The Demon God's intimidation faded, and the Servants coughed violently as air once again filled their lungs.

"A matter more urgent than those who defeated Lordias and his team?" the Demon God asked aggressively.

"Yes... According to Edmund, whom I successfully retrieved, they had learned of the meeting between the Demon King's daughter and the King of Windberg and planned to assassinate her to sow discord between humans and demonkin. Although Lordias and his team were defeated by unknown reinforcements, Edmund was able to use an Anathema on the Demon King's daughter... or at least he had for a moment."

"What do you mean? An Anathema is a permanent curse! Only a demon god can lift such a curse!" a Servant exclaimed incredulously.

Yutis seemed unsure, his brow slightly furrowed. “Yes, that should be the case. However, she was reportedly cured of the curse by a young man present at the scene. Not only was the curse lifted, but its effect was also reversed into a form of a blessing. It must have been a kind of Blessed Magic...”

The Servant who had spoken earlier snapped at Yutis once more. “What?! That’s preposterous! If you’re going to lie, at least make it a believable one!”

It was quite the anomaly—a young man whose mere presence seemed to block even the most potent divine interventions.

“Indeed, I would have preferred this to be a lie... But as it stands, the demonkin princess was saved, and Lordias and his team were nearly captured. Moreover, for reasons unknown, I was unable to travel to the past before Lordias’s defeat, or even interfere with that young man’s timeline in the past or future. Therefore, I was forced to retrieve the three of them at the last moment. Nothing like this has ever happened before...”

“Seriously...?” The other Servant was left speechless by Yutis’s genuine confusion and apparent helplessness in the situation.

“Yutis,” the Demon God addressed him sharply.

“Yes...?”

“If the return of my full powers could be hindered by this entity... you must eliminate it. Call upon the other God-followers, and eradicate this unknown force that has blocked your abilities. My Servants might fail, but you—my God-followers who have been bestowed with a greater share of my power—must surely be capable.”

“Yes! I will immediately inform the other God-followers, and we will crush any potential threats to Your Majesty.”

“I am counting on you. All of you here, cultivate the Seeds of Calamity sown across the world and bring about the apocalypse. That is my desire. By using this planet, which holds the remnants of the powers of the gods who sealed me, as my sacrificial offering, my resurrection will mark me as a supreme entity, unmatched by any. Upon that moment, I shall bestow upon you all great blessings.”

With unanimous nods, the Servants turned back into dark lights and vanished from the scene, leaving the Demon God alone once more.

“This notion of a threat to my existence... Impossible, impossible. I am a God. Erasing a person, even a world, is trivial for me. A threat? Ridiculous. Still, it’s an annoying distraction. But soon, it shall be resolved by my God-followers. My resurrection cannot be stopped...”

As its flame quietly flickered, it slowly diminished as if closing its eyes, vanishing quietly into the darkness.

Chapter 11: The Great Sage and the Kingblade

“Pheh... Has everyone cheered up a bit?” Headmaster Barnabus Aebrit of Barbodel Magic Academy muttered to himself as he watched his students clean up after the school festival. He had organized the festival to dispel the gloomy atmosphere that had filled the school following an attack by the Cult of the Wicked One, and succeeded to some extent.

“Not everyone had a good time, though...” he mused, aware that some students, particularly those from the Kaizell Empire in Class S, and many of the Heroes, seemed less than enthusiastic about the festivities.

“I wanted to give the young ones some time to relax, but...”

He sighed again and was about to join in cleaning up when he suddenly sensed something odd. It was the sensation of someone—more than one someone, in fact—using teleportation magic into the grounds of Barbodel Magic Academy.

When the Cult of the Wicked One had used similar magic to arrive even Barnabus hadn’t been able to detect it due to the Demon God’s protection. However, this time he clearly felt it... so it probably wasn’t them.

Still, Barnabus was cautious as he went to meet the unexpected visitors—

“Headmaster!” said a teacher bursting into the headmaster’s office, panting heavily.

“What is it? What’s happened?”

“Soldiers!” the teacher blurted, then paused to catch his breath. “There are soldiers here from the Kaizell Empire!”

“What did you say?!” Barnabus’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Apologies for the sudden visit,” came another unexpected voice as Zakia Gilford, known as the Kingblade, emerged with his second division subordinates of the Kaizell Empire.

Barnabus's gaze narrowed, his mind racing with questions. "What could bring such a big contingent of soldiers to this place, a gathering spot for people of all different nations and statuses... What's the meaning of this, Kingblade?"

Zakia didn't respond right away. He closed his eyes for a moment, seemingly in deep contemplation, before returning his gaze to Barnabus and saying, "Great Sage Barnabus Aebrit. As of today, this Barbodel Magic Academy will be operating under the auspices of the Kaizell Empire."

Barnabus's expression turned incredulous. "Is that so...?" The overwhelming presence his words carried caused Zakia's second division unit, including his aide Orphe Armond, to stiffen in unison.

"And here I thought you were about to say something sensible. You come completely unannounced, and now you tell me this place will be managed by the Kaizell Empire? Do you take me for a fool?" Barnabus's voice rose, his words laden with indignation.

"Regrettably, it is a decision made by His Imperial Majesty," Zakia replied, seemingly unflustered by the challenge.

Barnabus wasn't used to being spoken to in this way. His brow twitched as he processed the implications.

Silence ensued, and for how long it lasted even Orphe and the others could not tell. The air was heavy with tension, the weight of Zakia's words hanging in the balance.

It was Barnabus who finally broke the silence, his voice measured and deliberate. "What if I say no?"

"You have no right to refuse," Zakia stated firmly.

The tense environment made Orphe and the others eager to leave.

Barnabus began, "Ah... What on earth is your emperor-king thinking? This land has remained the only neutral ground. To have it run by a single nation is —"

"There's no need to worry about that. Because, as it turns out, the Kaizell Empire virtually rules the entire continent," Zakia said, interrupting him.

“What?!” Barnabus was shocked, his eyes wide in disbelief.

Zakia’s demeanor remained calm as he continued, “It seems you were unaware. There are only four entities left on this continent that oppose the Kaizell Empire: Varcia Empire, the Kingdom of Windberg, the Eastlands—and the demonkin lands.”

“That’s absurd!” Barnabus exclaimed.

More than a dozen nations existed beyond those Zakia had mentioned, so if his claim was true... the Kaizell Empire really had effectively seized control of the continent. After all, the Kingdom of Windberg, the Varcia Empire, and the Eastlands weren’t very big.

“Why has it come to this?” Barnabus sighed.

“During the recent cultural exchange between the demonkin races and the Kingdom of Windberg, the kingdom invited the Demon King’s daughter and gathered S Class adventurers from across the nation...” Zakia explained, his words creating an unsettling sense of inevitability. “We exploited this opportunity to target and capture the leaders of various nations directly. This has made it impossible for the countries across the continent to oppose the Kaizell Empire. And so, almost the entire continent has fallen into His Imperial Majesty’s hands.”

Barnabus stared at Zakia, his face a mask of incredulity. “Ridiculous... Impossible. Even without S Class adventurers, there should be strong soldiers and generals in these countries! To bypass them and directly target national leaders, one would have to be a Transcend—” Barnabus caught himself, realizing something.

“Transcendent Great Sage Barnabus... that title is not yours alone. I, too, have stepped into that realm. And it’s not just me. There are those who are more adept at covert operations than me, and others who specialize in combat... The military strength of the Kaizell Empire has been enhanced far beyond what you can imagine.”

Zakia’s words hung in the air, a stark reminder of the empire’s unprecedented power and reach.

“That’s impossible... Absolutely impossible! I haven’t heard anything like this until now! Why all of a sudden?!” Barnabus was bewildered, his mind reeling from the implications.

The fact that Zakia had become a Transcendent was not particularly surprising. However, according to Zakia’s statement, it seemed there were many more Transcendents within the Kaizell Empire. Becoming a Transcendent wasn’t something that just anyone could achieve—it was a status attainable only by those with exceptional talent, like the Kingblade or Great Sage Barnabus, and it took years of rigorous training and extensive battle experience.

If Zakia’s claims were true, and the Kaizell Empire had somehow produced or discovered many Transcendents, the implications were enormous. The balance of power on the continent would shift dramatically, potentially ushering in an era dominated by the Kaizell Empire.

Stunned yet compelled, Barnabus managed to ask, “Do you... do you really believe this is right? The last emperor-king didn’t want to unify the continent... and you looked up to him. Why would *you* simply comply with the current Emperor-King? Are there no soldiers or citizens who question this?”

After taking a moment to respond, Zakia’s voice was tinged with sorrow. “I’ve tried to change His Imperial Majesty’s mind too. I’ve even considered... killing him.”

“Zakia...” Orphe, who had witnessed Zakia’s inner struggles up close, gave him a sympathetic look.

“Then why... Why don’t you stop this? With your power, you could easily—” Barnabus pressed.

“It’s impossible.”

Barnabus was speechless, his mind racing with questions.

Zakia continued, “I can’t kill His Imperial Majesty. In fact, no one in this world can defeat him. Not even you, Barnabus...” His words then trailed off into an unsettling silence.

“Absurd! How could... What is...” Barnabus inadvertently turned his gaze to the second division unit led by Orphe, all of whom were looking down with

expressions of deep sorrow. Their faces told the whole story.

“What’s going on... What has happened...? The Kaizell Empire... What on earth is the Emperor-King of the Kaizell Empire doing...?” Barnabus’s voice was laced with confusion and concern.

After observing the faltering Barnabus, Zakia quietly looked away, turning his back to him. “Barnabus, I’ll take the Heroes back with me and give you one week—a grace period. Close the academy within this time. If you decide to send the students back to their homelands, we will overlook it. This is the best concession I can offer. However, if you continue beyond this... then we will obliterate this land along with everything on it.” Zakia’s words left no room for negotiation.

Barnabus was struck silent, staggered by the ultimatum.

“Farewell,” Zakia said, and then, leading Orphe and the others, he departed from the room. They left Barnabus feeling overwhelmed and powerless.

He had wanted to stop Zakia, but the shocking information he had just received rendered him unable to act calmly.

The teacher, who had been silently observing the entire exchange, spoke to Barnabus with a trembling voice, “Headmaster...”

“Get as much information as you can about the Kaizell Empire and the current situation on the continent. Be quick, you have three days.” The teacher nodded before hurrying away to complete the task.

Barnabus then looked upward, his thoughts consumed by the dire situation. “Why did this have to happen just as the atmosphere within the academy was brightening...” Nevertheless, he knew lamenting would change nothing—he had to act swiftly.

Now, with the future looking uncertain, it was essential to find out whether Zakia’s words were true. Barnabus was determined to protect the academy and its students.

Chapter 12: Magic Academy Shutdown

“The academy’s going to close.” Beatrice dropped this bombshell just before the start of class.

“Huh?” I exclaimed, my mind racing with questions.

“What?” Origa-chan echoed, equally perplexed.

Five days after the school festival, I had returned to the front of the F-Class homeroom with Origa-chan, carrying everything we would need for class, only to hear Beatrice’s shocking declaration.

“Closiiiiiiing?!” I shouted as her words sunk in.

“Why are you surprised too, Seiichi?!” Agnos exclaimed, as I stood there dumbfounded alongside my students. *What do you mean? I didn’t know!*

Beatrice’s expression turned remorseful as she explained, “I’m sorry... While Seiichi was out getting stuff for class, the headmaster told the teachers in the staff room. We were all so shocked, we didn’t even notice Seiichi wasn’t there...”

“Ah! Right, Seiichi wasn’t there, was he... I totally forgot until now...”

“I must be easy to miss! But don’t worry, it’s okay!” I joked, trying to lighten the mood.

“Right, if you heard the academy is closing, sparing any attention for me would be the least of your concerns.” *Is AI in this classroom because, perhaps, there won’t be any more classes?*

But, still, isn’t this too sudden? What the heck happened for such a decision to be made? I knew about the distrust and dark atmosphere building up due to that attack by the Cult of the Wicked One, but wasn’t the school festival helping to change the mood? If it closes, what was the point? The questions kept swirling in my mind.

“What on earth would cause such a sudden decision... Was it...? Ah, just remembering that embarrassing time makes me want to die. We’d better not talk about it anymore,” Agnos said, trying to brush off the topic.

Beatrice’s expression turned somber, and she glanced at Blud before revealing, “Apparently, the Kaizell Empire is going to take over this academy.”

The room erupted in shock and disbelief.

“What?!”

“That’s ridiculous!”

The Kaizell Empire? Why?

Even Blud, the second prince of the Kaizell Empire, looked just as confused as the rest of us.

“It’s unthinkable! Even if the Kaizell Empire... even if my father is trying for world unification, this academy is supported by financial aid and personnel from lots of countries, and it operates thanks to the students. To just oust the leadership and take over like this... The other nations won’t stay silent.”

Beatrice continued, “I haven’t heard the details myself... but now, it seems that most of this continent has come under the influence of the Kaizell Empire.”

Agnos’s disbelief was palpable. “What?! How the hell did that happen?! It might be powerful, but it’s just one country!”

Indeed, Beatrice’s statement was hard to accept. If the Kaizell Empire was indeed using some pretext to invade other nations, those nations would surely have taken precautions or formed alliances. There should have been some measures in place.

Could it be that those measures were so easily dismantled? And is it really possible to achieve their goal of unifying and managing the entire world? That seems impossible.

Helen’s face turned red with anger as she confronted Beatrice. “Wait a minute. When you say they’re under the Kaizell Empire’s influence, you mean they’ve been invaded...? What about the Varcia Empire? What happened to them?!”

Agnos and the others tried to calm Helen down.

“Hey, Helen?!”

“Whoa, chill out! What’s going on?!”

Her outrage was understandable. The situation was unfolding like a nightmare, and we were all struggling to keep up.

The Varcia Empire? I feel like I’ve heard of it somewhere, but I can’t quite remember. Given Helen’s distress, it might be her home country?

“Helen, please calm down,” Beatrice said, trying once again to reassure her. “While most of the nations are effectively under their control, the Windberg Kingdom, Varcia Empire, the Eastlands, and the demonkin realms are still resisting. But the situation is such that war might break out at any moment, and it’s unclear how long this stalemate can last.”

“That’s a relief to hear. I came with Seiichi to grow stronger, but if there was no country left for me to protect, what would I do?” Helen sighed.

“Yeah, I came here for training under my master too... It would be ridiculous if I didn’t have any home to go back to,” added another student.

That’s right... Louisse and Routier are connected to this. Of course, I am too.

Routier had defied her own military advisors to come with me—although she eventually received permission. She came to get stronger, a determination which was cemented in the dungeon where Zora had been found.

Louisse, too, had managed to persuade King Landzelf to let her come here.

If what Beatrice says is true, then my father in Windberg Kingdom should be all right. I’m not too worried since there are soldiers and Guild members there, and lately, even Saria’s parents have joined up with Zeanos and the former Heroes... Wait, that sounds like overkill... Eh, whatever!

Helen, upon hearing that the Varcia Empire was safe, just sat down on the floor. *Hmm... I really wonder what’s going on with her.*

“Anyway,” Beatrice resumed, “because of how many countries the Kaizell Empire is dominating right now, it has become impossible to operate this academy under international management. Apparently, the headmaster was

directly told about this almost a week ago, and if the academy closes immediately, they promised not to interfere until all of us have gone home.”

Blud said, “I see. So, the one who proposed this was the commander of the second division?”

“Huh? Do you know him?”

He paused. “Well, yeah. If it had been someone else from another unit instead, they wouldn’t have let the students go so easily... They probably would’ve used everyone as hostages. Only that person would have made such a considerate proposal.”

“Man, I hate to speak ill of your country, but I’m getting the impression it’s a crappy place?” Agnos asked, his words laced with disbelief.

Blud bowed his head in silence for a moment, an uncharacteristic gesture of defeat. “I’m sorry, I don’t know how to answer that.”

Well, at least now I understand why the closure is happening. Not that I’m satisfied with it.

“Can I ask one thing?” I requested.

“Yeah, what is it?” Beatrice replied.

“Based on what you and Blud said, the students can at least go back to their families, right?”

“Yeah, that’s right. The headmaster was considering the safety of the students when he made this decision.”

“I see... Then what about us, the teachers?”

“You’re fired,” Beatrice blurted out.

“Oh, wow, that’s blunt!” I exclaimed, hurt.

“Would you just take a break?!” Al smacked me on the head, chuckling.

I mean, even if you tell me to take a break... that’s just who I am. I am a teacher now, but back on Earth, I was a student, and now I’m getting fired before even dropping out or graduating? Phew! That’s rare!

As I dealt with all this information, Beatrice looked at Agnos and the others with a tinge of sadness in her eyes.

“I really wanted to keep teaching all of you until the end... but it seems that’s not going to be possible now. Heh... you all have been studying so hard recently, and I was looking forward to exams...”

“Beatrice...” Agnos’s voice trailed off, his expression sympathetic.

Beatrice had been dedicated to teaching Agnos and the others since the time they couldn’t use magic... No one could have imagined it would end like this.

“Now, there’s no time to mourn. Today, it seems we have one last visit from the Kaizell Empire. When soldiers from the Kaizell Empire came last time, the students and Heroes from their country were taken back, but the rest of you should start packing your belongings now—”

“Wait a minute, please!” I couldn’t help but interrupt Beatrice. “Taken back...? Are there no Heroes left in this academy now?!”

I had noticed since cleaning up after the school festival that I hadn’t seen Kannazuki-senpai and the others, but I thought it was because they didn’t run a booth and had other things to do.

I haven’t seen them since... or rather, I wouldn’t usually see them unless Kannazuki-senpai decided to charge in out of nowhere.

So, I hadn’t really noticed they were away...

“Seiichi. Take this.” Beatrice handed me a letter, her expression somber.

“Huh, what’s this?”

Confused, I quickly opened it and skimmed through.

And...

“Kannazuki-senpai hasn’t changed a bit.”

The letter read: “Now that the power of the armlet is removed, I can’t abandon the teachers and other Heroes. I will do what I can.”

Kannazuki-senpai had always put others before herself, helping everyone around her.

That's why we revered and respected her. Her selflessness and dedication were inspiring, and now her absence was deeply felt.

Even here in this other world, Kannazuki-senpai remains the same... Still looking out for me. But, that's not the only reason, right? She's always tried to keep me out of trouble... thinking about me. That's why she kept silent. Of course, I don't think the Kaizell Empire would allow her to come see me.

"Ughhh... I really can't understand this... but I guess there's no point in me making a fuss here." *Honestly, I feel so frustrated that they won't just leave us alone. It's not like Agnos and the others are leaving this place because they want to. Really... What is war all about...?*

As the classroom sunk into a somber mood, Blud suddenly bowed to us, hiding his face as he did so. "I'm truly sorry. My country... It's because of my father that it's come to this..." His voice was shaking.

Agnos said, trying to comfort him, "Haah... hey, I've said something similar before, but it's not your fault, right? All the crappy things happening, the bad stuff, it's all your old man's doing. You don't have to apologize!"

"Yeah, yeah, that's right! It's not your fault, Blud!" Leon added.

"It's hard to say, 'Don't worry about it,' but... this isn't something Blud should fret over," Berard chimed in.

Right, like they said, it's not Blud's fault. Just because he's the second prince of the Kaizell Empire doesn't mean he's responsible for his father's actions. It's wrong to blame him for that.

Hearing everyone's words, Blud continued hanging his head. Trembling, he said, "My father... Why...? I'm sorry... Truly sorry..."

"Blud..." I felt a pang of sympathy for him. If he had no strings attached to the Kaizell Empire, maybe something could have been done... but for Blud, the Emperor-King of the Kaizell Empire was his father. *It's a complex situation, but because I also care deeply about my own father, I understand that if I were in Blud's position... I couldn't just take action against him.*

Yeah, I've decided. I'll support Blud, no matter what.

“Beatrice, those people from the Kaizell Empire are coming later today, right?”

“Uh, yes,” Beatrice nodded, but gave me a puzzled look.

“Aniki?” Agnos asked, perplexed.

“You know, I’ve been thinking... I don’t have much life experience, and I’m certainly not the sharpest tool in the shed, so I really can’t tell what the right thing to do is,” I admitted, scratching my head.

Even if I wanted to do something about the Kaizell Empire, there are innocent people living there who have nothing to do with any of this. I can’t change that.

“So, since it looks like I’m going to be fired after today anyway, I might as well go out with a bang!” I declared, a mischievous grin spreading across my face.

“Huh?” Everyone looked at me with dumbfounded expressions, clearly taken aback by my sudden boldness.

Chapter 13: Complaint

“Barnabus, today’s the day! Are you ready?”

The headmaster didn’t respond.

I, Zakia Gilford, had returned to the Barbodel Magic Academy.

The academy had been operated as a neutral entity, supported by financial aid and personnel sent from countries around the world. *Of course, maintaining complete neutrality in such a school is difficult, with significant vested interests moving behind the scenes. Nevertheless, this was a rare occurrence.*

But it’s now coming to an end.

The Emperor-King of my homeland, the Kaizell Empire, His Imperial Majesty Sheldt vol Kaizell, had started moving toward world unification. At first, I opposed it. It wasn’t just a significant deviation from the philosophy of the previous emperor-king—who was also my benefactor. Considering the military and resource aspects, it seemed unfeasible.

That’s why when His Imperial Majesty pushed ahead with world unification, I considered deposing him. But that didn’t happen. I never expected that His Imperial Majesty... no, that the imperial family had such an ace up their sleeve.

“Truly, if this academy is closed, can the students safely return home?” Barnabus asked me with a stern face.

“Yes. I assure you of that. We will not interfere with the students until they have safely returned home. In fact, there are hardly any left here now, right?”

“Hmph. If it were anyone but you... I wouldn’t have believed it...”

Barnabus doesn’t trust me, not really. But he believes that if it were anyone else, they would have harmed the students.

And there’s truth to that. If it weren’t me here, without any negotiations, they would have simply taken control of the academy and used the students as

hostages, turning them into yet another bargaining chip for the Kaizell Empire.

“Well, then. From this moment forward, the Barbodel Magic Academy is under the control of the Kaizell Empire...”

“Hold it right there!” shouted an unfamiliar voice.

“?! ”

“What?! ”

An intruder had burst into the headmaster’s office. The figure was suspicious, cloaked in a hood, making it impossible to see their face. *Who is this man...?*

Following him, several others hurried in, gasping for breath.

“Hey... Sei... Seiichi... You... you’re too fast...”

“Never mind that, did this guy really just barge in...?”

Upon closer inspection, I could see Prince Blut of the Kaizell Empire among them.

One of my subordinates raised his voice at the intruder.

“You there! Who are you? We’re in an important meeting between our commander and the headmaster of this academy! Do you understand what you’re interrupting...?”

“No, sorry! But apparently, I’m getting fired today, so I came to complain!”

“Complain?! ”

“He’s quite straightforward, huh!”

We were all caught off guard by his refreshingly blunt manner.

As we stood there dumbfounded, the man in the hood turned toward us and pointed.

“You! You seem to be the most important one here, so I’m talking to you. First of all, this is really inconvenient for me! I’m getting fired... Fired! Laid off! Do you understand?! Normally, I’d expect to be expelled before getting fired, but here I am experiencing termination first... How unusual!”

“Uh, all right?”

What on earth is this man talking about? What is he trying to say?

“I don’t care about your world unification or whatever it is, but could you please do it somewhere else? Really, stop dragging us into it! Think about how us ordinary citizens feel getting tossed about by you important people! We’re powerless!”

“You, powerless? What kind of scam is that?!”

“Isn’t that a bit harsh?!”

While we were still trying to understand the situation, the mysterious man and a dark-skinned woman who followed him were exchanging words like a comedic duo. *What are we even watching here?*

We should have been controlling the atmosphere, but we’d found ourselves completely upstaged by one man.

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I—Seiichi Hiiragi, without any particular plan though intent on airing my grievances—stormed into the headmaster’s office, only to find some burly men in armor speaking with Barnabus. *Well, I charged in without thinking, but luckily there is someone here I can complain to!*

And now, I’m unleashing all my frustrations on the man who seems to be the most important person here.

“First of all, what’s the deal with Blud! You took back all the other kids from the Kaizell Empire and the Heroes earlier, so why did you leave him behind?!”

“That’s... true...!” Blud nodded at my words and turned to face the man who appeared to be important, who then awkwardly averted his gaze.

“Uh, I forgot...”

“I was forgotten?!”

What the heck! Isn’t he supposed to be a prince?! I’m just shocked by everything the Kaizell Empire does!

The man I had pointed at cleared his throat, then fixed a sharp gaze on me. “I’ve been listening quietly so far... but who are you, exactly? I’m sorry, but if you’re not involved, please leave.”

Ah... Right, I haven’t introduced myself. And anyway, the person I was talking to was my superior. Even if I was here to complain, I should still mind my manners! Well, except maybe with Gars and others due to a variety of reasons, I don’t use formal speech. Sorry about that!

“Ahem! Well, I’m Seiichi Hiiragi, an adventurer hired by this school’s headmaster, Barnabus.”

“An adventurer...?”

“Hey now, aren’t adventurers basically vagrants who don’t belong to any particular country?”

“And from the sound of his name, he’s from the Eastlands, isn’t he?”

The soldiers began to murmur. *Did I make an odd introduction?*

The authoritative figure responded with his own introduction. “Right. I’m Zakia Gilford, Commander of the Second Division of the Kaizell Empire, dispatched here for the closure and management of Barbodel Magic Academy.”

“So, Seiichi, you said you came here to complain... What do you intend to do after complaining?”

“Well, nothing really. I just came to complain, that’s all.”

“What?”

“Eh?”

Silence fell in the headmaster’s office. *Wait, did I say something weird? Al and them look surprised too, but I thought I made it clear I was just here to complain...*

“Why are you looking so comfortable?! It’s weird enough that you came in here just to complain, so it’s natural for people to think you might have other intentions!” Al hit me with a too-accurate jab.

Zakia sighed. “Ah... This is a waste of time.”

“Eh?” I asked, confused.

“I don't know who you are or what brought you to this place, but... no matter how much you complain, it's useless. This is something decided by the Kaizell Empire, and no one can overturn it.”

“No, no, no, that's ridiculous! Sure, I'm here to complain for of my own satisfaction, but—”

“So, it *was* just for your own satisfaction...” Blud muttered wearily.

Sorry, forgive me! I basically live on momentum alone!

I continued, “Even if it's for my own satisfaction, I can't accept that the Kaizell Empire's decision is absolute. Why does this academy have to be closed in the first place?”

“It's simple. The war started because the Emperor-King of the Kaizell Empire, His Imperial Majesty Sheldt vol Kaizell, has started a campaign for world unification,” Zakia explained.

“Who's that to me?”

“*Who's that?!*” Al echoed incredulously.

Okay, I understand he's the Emperor-King of the Kaizell Empire, but I don't know the guy...

“Well, I get that this emperor started moving toward world unification. But is that really necessary? Going so far as to wage war? It's called world *unification*, so it's not really about the good of the people of the Kaizell Empire, is it?” I asked.

“No, this war is not for the sake of the people,” Zakia confirmed. “It's just a war driven by His Imperial Majesty's desires.”

“That's just... Father...” Blud muttered, his expression darkening.

Agnos looked like he wanted to say something but was stopped by Beatrice. *Good, it would only make things more complicated if they got involved.*

Maybe if I hadn't barged in, things wouldn't have gotten so awkward!

“Ah... so, this is a war based on one person’s desires, and the people are just supposed to accept that? I certainly wouldn’t...”

“The Emperor-King has already decided. Besides, you’re not a citizen of the Kaizell Empire, so you don’t have the right to object,” Zakia stated firmly.

“Denied human rights by a stranger?! Is my status as a ‘breathing human’ not sufficient?!” I exclaimed, indignant. “And really, do you think you can win with pure military power? It’s basically the world versus the Kaizell Empire, right? Are you guys actually okay with this? Going to war over someone’s personal desires?”

Zakia remained silent, his expression inscrutable.

“Wait, you don’t agree with it?! Then why are you following along? What’s going on?!” I pressed, confused.

This is ridiculous! If they don’t agree, they should be staging a coup or protesting it. If everyone in the nation supported the war, there’d be nothing I could say, but are there really people who are even for it? Even though it might lead to a civil war, if more people are against it than for it, a coup might actually succeed.

I wasn’t sure if my point got across, but Zakia just shook his head. “It’s impossible. There’s no one left who can stop His Imperial Majesty... He’s become more than a mere human—the strongest entity in this world.”

“The strongest entity in this world?” I repeated, baffled. *What’s that about? Whose story is that? The way Zakia puts it, it sounds like he’s become some kind of monster.*

Unfortunately, it seemed Zakia had no intention of elaborating.

“And you think the Kaizell Empire can’t possibly win against the world, but you’re wrong,” Zakia said, a hint of a smile on his face.

“Huh?” I said, taken aback.

At that moment, Zakia drew the sword at his hip. “There are tens of thousands of soldiers with strength similar to my own.”

“What?!” I exclaimed, shocked.

“Ugh! This pressure...!” Beatrice groaned, her face pale.

As Zakia and his soldiers drew their swords, Blud, Agnos, and Barnabus’s eyes widened with fear.

“If you’re fazed by this, we have nothing to talk about...” Zakia remarked with a smirk, “It’s understandable, though. Not everyone is on the same level as the Kingblade.”

“So what?” I replied.

Zakia looked puzzled.

Barnabus, Blud, and the soldiers of the second division also looked perplexed. “Uh?”

My question seemed to dumbfound them all.

“Weren’t you listening? I just said there are tens of thousands of beings on par with me—the Kingblade!”

“Sorry for my ignorance, but... are you a celebrity? Are you saying there are a lot of famous people like you, Zakia-san?” I was genuinely confused.

Bewildered, Al placed a hand on her forehead and looked up toward the heavens. “I was wondering the same thing, Seiichi!”

I noticed that while Blud and Beatrice seemed to struggle as soon as Zakia drew his sword, Saria, Al, Lulune, and I—who had all ventured into the dungeon with Zora—seemed unaffected. Wait a minute... Was Zakia doing something out of the ordinary?

“Ridiculous! How can you all remain so calm?! Every soldier here in the second division has stepped into the realm of the Transcendents!” Zakia exclaimed.

“Ah, just like us,” I replied nonchalantly.

Zakia and his men gasped in surprise, while Barnabus and Agnos burst out laughing. “Bwah!”

That’s right, Transcendents are actually amazing, aren’t they? I’ve become numb to it since there are so many strong people around me—like everyone at

the Guild Headquarters, or Zeanos and his group.

I inquired further, "So, you mean because Kaizell Empire has many Transcendents, you can win?"

"That's right." Zakia said.

Seriously? In my mind, I only see a future where the Guild members comically beat them... And even if the Kaizell Empire were to wage war against the Windberg Kingdom, could they really win with Lucius and Zeanos around? Transcendents are those who surpass Level 500, but Zeanos is Level 1,500, isn't he?

I ran a combat simulation in my mind.

"Well, my condolences..."

Zakia looked at me with a puzzled expression.

"What's with you?!" he asked.

Oops, it seems I said that out loud.

The probability that the Kaizell Empire could achieve global dominance is slim at best. In my mind, the matter is already settled.

"Judging by your behavior and speech, those women there are Transcendents, right?" Zakia asked.

"Yeah," I replied.

"But what about you? I can't sense any aura of strength from you. You can't defeat me!"

"Huh?" I responded, taken aback.

Aura of strength? Well, I'm just an ordinary person, so I don't give off the same "tough guy" vibe that some master might. But, in the Underworld, I did pick up the skill to sense the life forces of others.

Zakia's expression turned serious. "If you can't beat me, there's no way you could ever defeat His Imperial Majesty. I'll show you just how powerless you are!"

"Uh... what do you mean?"

“It’s simple. We’ll fight, and I’ll make an example of you!”

“How did it come to this?!” I exclaimed, bewildered.

Are these military folks all just muscle heads?!

Chapter 14: Human vs. Kingblade?

“Umm... can we not do this? Conflict doesn't really solve anything!” I pleaded.

Zakia remained silent, his expression unyielding.

“Okay, can you please not just stand there silently sharpening your sword?!”

Despite my protests, I ended up being dragged to the arena by Zakia.

I'm trying to stop this, but Zakia and the other soldiers are belligerent, and Saria and the others are starting to cheer me on. They do realize I'm the one who has to fight, right?

“Then, let's talk this through! We have mouths and words! Let's discuss this!” I suggested desperately.

“Words are unnecessary,” Zakia replied, his voice cold. “Our swords will do the talking.”

“Swords can't actually speak, you know?!”

Why does everyone think we can communicate with weapons?!

While I was ranting, Zakia sheathed his well-maintained sword.

“Ah... you've finally decided to talk?!” I said, surprised.

“You can be defeated with a single strike of *lai*,” he added, referring to a fast unsheathing attack.

“Why are you so aggressive?” I asked, genuinely curious.

“Are most people in this world creatures that can't settle down without fighting? Tell me, grandpa!” I exclaimed, throwing my hands up in exasperation.

It's not true,” a voice replied, as if from nowhere.

Wait, what?! Where?! Is grandpa from the Alps here?! This is a different world?!

"I am not a grandpa. I am the world," the voice clarified, leaving me stunned.

Okay, looks like my mind has gone off the deep end.

Well, can't be helped, right? I've blown away dungeons and acted quite "inhuman" for some time.

I'm not in the Underworld, so hearing the voice of the world is just weird, right?!

Apparently, the recent string of unusual events had left me exhausted, so I shook my head to reset, and the strange voice faded away.

All right, I'm back to normal. But maybe I should visit a hospital soon. It's not just my head that's off, my body's been acting up too. Accidentally helping people without even realizing it, that's how off-kilter I am.

"Anyway! I really think violence is *not* the answer!" I exclaimed.

Zakia didn't respond, but his gaze remained fixed on me.

"Can you please say something?!" I pleaded once more. "Conversation is a give and take, like playing catch! Right now, I feel like I'm playing against a wall!"

"Silence. No matter how much you try to play with words, it's futile," Zakia replied, his voice cold.

"Ouch, that was harsh!"

"Shut up and draw your sword."

"This isn't catch at all! It's like having fastballs hurled at me nonstop...!"

I'm telling you, my catcher's mitt isn't that padded. I might just start crying at this rate, and it would be a cry heard around the nation.

Despite my fervent protests, Zakia proceeded with his preparations, staring at me with cold eyes.

"Let me make one thing clear. Don't expect this to be a 'match,' because you won't be able to do anything," he said, his voice devoid of emotion.

"Eh?" I said, confused.

I'm being forced into a duel where I can't do anything?! What's even the point of me being here?

"Now then, let me show you how powerless you are. Barnabus, referee," Zakia said, turning to the headmaster.

"Uh, okay..." Barnabus replied, looking worried.

Wait, you're not going to stop this?

"Then... the match between Kingblade Zakia and Seiichi begins now!" Barnabus announced, his voice resigned.

It's started! What do I do? Do I have to fight?

As I panicked, Zakia reached for the hilt of his sword.

"This ends now. Die!" he exclaimed.

"This is just a mock battle, right?!" I asked, desperate.

Nope, it looked like Zakia was going for the kill. With murder in his eyes, he tried to draw his sword from its sheath, closing the distance between us at the same time—and spectacularly face-planted instead.

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Zakia was unable to hide his confusion over this unprecedented mishap. Always meticulous in combat, he'd never shown a moment of vulnerability before, often finishing weaker opponents with a single stroke. He looked over the arena's surface, and was confident there was nothing that could trip him. Yet, when he had charged toward me, his body suddenly refused to cooperate, and he ended up crashing face-first into the ground.

"Um... are you okay? You fell pretty hard on your face there..." I asked, genuine concern in my voice.

Zakia's face heated up with embarrassment. Trying to maintain his composure, he began to rise and draw his sword once more.

"Huh—hmp?!" he grunted.

Despite all his efforts, his treasured Gemblade Fiftia wouldn't budge from its sheath. It was as if the sword itself had renounced its role in battle, steadfastly refusing to be drawn after so many battles fought together.

What's happening? What's going on?! Zakia must've been thinking to himself, his internal turmoil visibly escalating.

Desperately and somewhat pathetically, he continued to struggle with his sword in front of what might as well have been his enemy.

Zakia's sword seemed resolutely unwilling to fight me. All I could do was look on in silent wonder.

Frustration written all over his face, he finally gave up on drawing his sword and instead raised it in its sheath above his head.

"Even if I can't draw it, this will be enough... Take this. Heavencrusher! Aghhhhhhh?!" Zakia exclaimed.

"What the... Is this self-destruction?!" I asked, shocked.

Zakia swung the sheathed sword downward, attempting to unleash a technique on me, but bizarrely, the attack rebounded back toward him instead. The technique, which should have created a tempest with Zakia at its center, caught Zakia himself in its violent winds.

Zakia spiraled to the ground, landing face first.

"Ouch... that looks painful..." I winced.

He remained silent, his face red with embarrassment and confusion. As he tried to rise yet again, his legs failed him as if they too had forsaken their duty, leaving him limp. Struggling to stand, he managed to support himself and took a step forward, only for the ground to suddenly lose all friction. Zakia couldn't secure his footing and slipped, falling hard once more.

"What's happening... What's happening to me?! What's wrong with my body?!" Zakia exclaimed, his embarrassment turning to panic.

Unable to even stand properly, let alone understand the reason, Zakia was now engulfed in fear. Observing this bizarre scene, Barnabus, Saria, and the others could only share in his confusion.

From the beginning of this mock battle, Zakia had done nothing but defeat himself.

“If not by blade, then by magic!” he exclaimed.

“Ah, that might not be the best idea!” I warned.

“Take this... Flame Bullet! Aghhhhhhh?!” Zakia shouted.

“I told you so...” I said, shaking my head.

Just as I’d feared, Zakia’s magic instantly turned against him. Thinking it was just bad luck, he stubbornly continued trying, but each spell backfired.

Watching Zakia becoming increasingly battered, I approached him slowly, filled with sorrow.

“Um... I really don’t understand what’s happening, but shouldn’t we stop this? There’s no point in having a mock battle with me...” I said, concerned.

“Raaaaaah! Gahhhhhhhhh?!” Zakia roared, frustrated.

“Are you not listening?! And self-destructing again?!” I asked, exasperated.

Seizing what he thought was an opportunity, he frantically unleashed all his skills.

Yet, each one backfired, leaving him even more beaten than before.

Still, determined to defeat me, he gripped his sword again, and finally—perhaps out of pity—the Gemblade Fiftia came out of its sheath.

“At last...!” Zakia exclaimed, relieved.

Apparently convinced he could now defeat me, he lunged forward. However, as if to say, “That would be problematic,” the blade of the Gemblade Fiftia bent grotesquely on its own.

“Why is this happening?!” Zakia asked, despairing.

“I don’t know!” I replied, equally perplexed.

As he kept trying to attack me, his bent sword became completely distorted and slipped from his grasp.

With his trusted sword lying discarded on the ground, Zakia's shoulders trembled. "Enough. If neither sword nor magic will serve me, then my own body must suffice!" Noticing my concerned approach, Zakia, now close enough to strike, threw a punch.

"Uoooooh—bwahaaaah?!"

Rather than hitting me, the punch curved, landing squarely on his own face. His blow was so powerful it sent him flying backward.

As he lay dazed by the counterattack from his own body, Zakia attempted to soothe his struck cheek, only to inexplicably start slapping himself back and forth. "Bububububububububububu?!"

Confounded by his own actions and unable to stop, Zakia lost all of his vigor, and lay sprawled out on the ground, gasping for breath.

Witnessing this, the soldiers of the second division stared at me in disbelief, their eyes full of anger.

"You bastard! What have you done to Commander Zakia?!" one of them growled.

"Wha—?! Hey, I didn't do anything!" I protested, but the angry, fiercely loyal soldiers were itching for a confrontation.

"Hold on!" Orphe, their vice-captain, tried to intervene, but the others were too incensed.

Even Barnabus, the referee, hesitated to intervene, then muttered, "Well, maybe it's okay. My academy's fate is sealed anyway. At least we get to watch something entertaining."

"No, you should be stopping this!" I exclaimed.

"What's going on here?!"

As the soldiers of the second division considered how to inflict maximum pain on me, each of their weapons, one by one, abandoned its role as an instrument of war. Some shattered into irreparable pieces, and before they knew it, like Zakia, they were left with nothing but their own bodies to fight with. However,

upon charging at me, their bodies, driven by a separate will, began to flee the scene—yes, their very bodies rejected the fight.

Screams of agony filled the air.

“Ah, my arm!” a soldier cried.

“My eyes... my eyes hurt!” another screamed.

“What, what, what, what, what, what’s happening?!” still another asked, panicked.

Bones became dislocated. Eyes tried to pop out of their sockets. Body hair, including hair follicles, began shedding. Teeth fell out all at once.

Faced with the horrific sight of the second division in utter chaos, and clueless about the cause, I was frantic.

“What’s going on?! They get involved in the mock battle and suddenly start bleeding from all over?! Is there some virus spreading here?! This is the kind of thing that happens in comics and dramas, but...”

At the sound of my dismay, in a bizarre turn of events, the bodies of the soldiers began reassembling themselves.

Relieved, the men who had been screaming in agony just moments ago, were now lying on the ground, checking their bodies.

“Ah, my hand... it moves properly!”

“I can see... I can really see...”

“Thank goodness... thank goodness...”

Their resolve to attack me had invited such an abnormal turn of events, that everything they used from this world—including weapons, skills, magic, and even their own bodies—turned against them. I, who had unwittingly caused this tragedy, had no idea why it was happening. I felt genuinely terrified.

As they rejoiced in their returned normalcy, Zakia, having recovered enough to stand, fixed his eyes on me. “Was this your doing?!” he demanded.

“Eh? No, no, no, that can’t be right!” I hesitated. “Right?”

He was unappeased. “To mock not just me, but my comrades as well... Unforgivable!”

“You’re being totally unreasonable!”

Zakia, undeterred and not having learned his lesson, lunged at me once more — “Ah! The Teleportation Gem!” Orphe exclaimed.

“What?! Orphe, what are you doing?” Zakia asked, shocked.

Silent until now, Orphe, the vice-captain of the second division, pulled a palm-sized transparent gem from his pocket and hurled it at the ground. The gem shattered on impact, releasing a cloud of smoke that quickly enveloped Zakia, Orphe, and all the soldiers of the second division.

When the engulfing smoke eventually cleared, Zakia and his troops were nowhere to be seen.

Stunned by the sudden turn of events, I stood dumbfounded. Barnabus and the others were equally shocked, their mouths agape.

Barnabas, being the first to regain composure, resumed his role as referee. “Ahh... The winner is Seiichi-kun...?!” However, it was hard for anyone to discern if what had just unfolded could still be called a “battle.” It had been that one-sided.

Standing dazed, I muttered to myself, “I really didn’t do anything...”

Chapter 15: Zakia's Resolve and Farewell

Zakia and his team, transported back to the Kaizell Empire via the Teleportation Gem used by Orphe, looked around to find themselves already shifted from Barbodel Magic Academy. Zakia's glare landed fiercely on Orphe.

"Orphe, what have you—" Zakia began, but Orphe cut him off.

"What were you thinking, Zakia-san?!" Orphe exclaimed, his voice stern.

Zakia's eyes widened in surprise, and before he could reply, Orphe's sharp fist caught the man's cheek.

"What was that attitude back there?! What the hell happened?! That's not like you!"

"Me... Not like me...?" Zakia repeated, taken aback.

"Your behavior at the academy was no different from the first division! Why did you do that?!" Orphe demanded.

"I was... Ah?!" Zakia started to explain, but a sudden, severe pain assaulted his head.

"Zakia-san?!" Orphe asked, concerned.

"I'm... I'm all right... So, that's what it was..." Zakia gritted his teeth, enduring the pain.

Gripping his head, he remembered something.

"I was ensnared by Helio's spell...!" he revealed.

"Lord Helio's spell?!" Orphe's eyes widened in surprise.

Known as the Phantom Mage, Helio Lorban was the most formidable magic user in the Kaizell Empire, wielding the unique Phantom Magic and serving as the right-hand man to the current Emperor-King, Sheldt vol Kaizell.

The members of Zakia's second division, comprised of commoners, and the first division, made up entirely of nobles, among other soldiers of the Kaizell Empire, had only recently become Transcendents. This transformation began when Helio presented a certain object to Emperor-King Sheldt.

It was a magical artifact found by Helio and had the astonishing power to easily increase anyone's level and even allow them to transcend their maximum level limits. Normally, numerous questions about such a suspicious artifact and its origins should have been asked.

Oddly, no one raised any doubts because, by the time Helio introduced it, many were already under the influence of his Phantom Magic. Unbeknownst to them, the empire's most formidable magic user had been using this magic to manipulate everyone, to varying degrees.

Helio had particularly focused his magic on Zakia, who he viewed as the most critical to influence, thus, his personality had been altered and manipulated.

What Helio hadn't calculated, and what turned out to be fortunate for Zakia, was that Orphe, a subordinate, was not so much affected by Helio's magic once in the presence of Seiichi.

Although some might have found Zakia's change in personality strange, they did not point it out due to the spell's influence.

Had he simply gone to Barbodel Magic Academy to talk with Barnabas and returned, nothing would have changed. However, Seiichi's unexpected intervention by barging in to complain had changed the course of events.

If it had been anyone other than Seiichi, the situation might have been different. His arrival at this juncture was a critical twist of fate.

The power of his presence was enough to shatter the influence of Helio's magic, which would not have been dispelled by any lesser impact.

"Zakia... what do we do now? This situation with Helio's magic is quite problematic," Orphe inquired, looking seriously at his commander.

"Yes. Now that we know we were under his spell, we must be even more cautious with our actions. From what we see to what we think—everything

must be questioned,” Zakia responded, his voice heavy, and his face etched with bitterness.

“For now, let’s focus on bringing everyone in the second division back to their senses,” he continued.

“Right,” Orphe agreed.

Zakia and Orphe began the task of individually convincing each soldier and dispelling Helio’s magic. Since no one had been as heavily enchanted as Zakia, the process wasn’t overly time consuming.

Nevertheless, the soldiers of the second division were stunned upon realizing they had been under Helio’s magical influence.

“Could it really be that Helio...” one soldier muttered in disbelief.

“What have we been doing all this time...?” another lamented.

“We’re no different from the first division then...!”

“How many countries have we invaded...?”

The awareness of their own actions flooded in, bringing intense regret. Countless people had suffered from their actions.

Seeing this, Zakia promptly ordered the soldiers of the second division to return to the barracks and rest, understanding the deep turmoil they must be feeling. They staggered away, visibly shaken and overwhelmed.

Orphe watched their retreating figures with a sorrowful gaze, deeply reflecting on the past events and the journey that lay ahead.

“Anyway, it’s good that everyone has come to their senses...”

“Yes, but that hasn’t solved our problems. If anything, it’s made things more complicated,” Zakia replied.

“How so?”

“First off, the fact that Helio cast spells on us means... There’s a possibility he’s used magic on His Imperial Majesty as well.”

“Are you suggesting that this is... a coup?” Orphe asked, aghast.

“I’m not sure of that yet. But if magic has been used on the Emperor-King, then he’s undoubtedly aligned with Helio, probably under even stronger spells than we were. And if, hypothetically, Helio is planning a coup... we need to figure out if this is the action of an individual or an organization.”

“You think someone’s behind Helio?”

“It’s speculative, but not impossible. At this point, I wouldn’t be surprised to find out he has powerful backers.”

“That’s concerning...”

With a heavy sigh, Zakia continued to unravel his thoughts. “And while Helio himself is a major issue, there’s another significant problem we have to address.”

“Another problem similar to Helio?”

“It’s the Emperor-King. No one can stop him now that he has used that artifact... the one known only within the Kaizell royal family.”

“That means...”

Zakia’s tone grew heavy. “That’s right... The Emperor-King possesses a power which even Transcendents cannot comprehend. He could conquer this world on his own if he wished.”

Orphe didn’t respond.

“And that’s why we must act!” Zakia said.

“Act? What do you mean?”

“There are still countries that haven’t fallen to the Kaizell Empire.”

“You are referring to the Kingdom of Windberg, the Varcia Empire, the demonkin realms, and the Eastlands, right?” Orphe clarified.

“Yes, Windberg may be a small kingdom, but it hosts the Sword Knight, the Black Paladin, and the Ice Beauty Demon. The Guild Headquarters is also there... Now that I think about it, I thought I saw the Sword Knight at Barbodel Magic Academy earlier...”

“Are you sure? Wouldn’t royal guards stay close to their king?”

“That’s a fair point. Anyway, Windberg possesses significant power despite its size. The Varcia Empire, ruled by the Crimson Empress, has military forces comparable to ours before we became Transcendents. They were formidable. Not underestimating the Empress’s power either. The demonkin realms, needless to say, have powerful demonkin, so no issues there. The Eastlands, however... that place is too enigmatic. Even the Emperor-King didn’t pay it much attention initially, plus there are rumors of severe civil strife there. His Imperial Majesty is likely not concerned with them.”

“It seems those nations have remained independent for a reason.”

“Indeed. If the Emperor-King were to intervene directly... the outcome would be decisive. However, if we are already there, we might be able to prevent His Imperial Majesty from stepping in. Yes, if we act as puppets under Helio’s control... we can possibly make it appear to them as though an invasion is taking place.”

“So, you mean to deceive Helio and his allies?”

Zakia nodded solemnly. “If it becomes known that the spells on us have been broken, it’s unpredictable what Helio might do next. We can’t be sure where else he might have cast his magic, and we must ensure that we aren’t misled by it.”

“That’s troubling...”

“However, thanks to you, Orphe, I’ve awakened. It’s not a guaranteed victory, but if we know that Helio’s magic is in play, we can at least prepare to defend against it. We have to be cautious and strategic moving forward.”

“But even if you manage to stay sane and inform the Kingdom of Windberg and others about the situation with the Emperor-King, will that really make a difference? It seems like no one can stop him now.”

“The former emperor-king—Alph-sama—might know a way to stop him.”

“Alph-sama? But... he is...”

“Yes, first we have to rescue Alph-sama—without letting Helio and the others catch on.”

“Zakia...” Orphe glanced at him with a worried expression.

“Don’t worry! I’ve gotten used to being a puppet. We can do this, Orphe. We can change this situation... even if just a little.”

“Yes!” Orphe felt encouraged by Zakia’s determination.

As Zakia nodded in satisfaction, an image of Seiichi, who had unwittingly thwarted him at Barbodel Magic Academy, flashed through his mind.

“That man... Who is he?” Zakia muttered to himself. He wondered if their paths would cross again and what significance this mysterious individual held in the grand scheme of things.

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“Seiichi-san, it was only for a short time, but... thank you so much,” Beatrice said, giving me a bow as she packed her belongings. “Because of you, everyone in Class F can now use magic. Something I could never have accomplished... A dream I’ve seen come true thanks to you, Seiichi-san. I really am grateful.”

“Me? I’m just... I just happened to gain power by chance.”

I’m not skilled. The first time I defeated a monster wasn’t due to talent; it was just that my body smelled so bad the monster died on its own.

Yet here I am, having been saved by the Perfect Loot skill and the Fruit of Evolution that a God gave me as a farewell gift when I left my own world.

Well, the effects of the Fruit of Evolution are beyond my imagination and sometimes cause me trouble, but I am grateful.

My power just happened to be useful for everyone in Class F, but without it, I’d just be a powerless being.

Beatrice shook her head at my words. “No, Seiichi-san. Regardless of the process, the fact that they can use magic is undoubtedly due to you. So, please take pride in that.”

“Okay...”

Really, I’m not much.

But if Beatrice says so... I guess I have to try a little harder to take pride in myself.

Seeing my face, Beatrice smiled brightly and then started walking with her luggage.

“Beatrice-san!”

She turned around with a puzzled look when I called out to her.

“Even if I allowed them to use magic, *you’ve* supported them up to this point! It’s not just me... no, you’ve done more than me! You should take pride in that. You are the best teacher in my eyes!”



Beatrice's eyes widened. *In my life, I've never seen anyone who cares about, and rejoices in the growth of, their students more than Beatrice. No, I doubt I'll ever meet a teacher who surpasses her in the future. Beatrice has supported and stood by Class F far more than someone like me ever could.*

Agnos and the others gathered around and began to praise Beatrice.

"Beatrice-neesan! We'll never forget that you didn't abandon us!"

"You taught us something really important! We owe you our respect and gratitude."

"Take care..."

"Beatrice-san! Really... truly, thank you!"

"Thank you. We're so grateful to Beatrice-sensei."

"I want to be in your classes again!"

"Because of Beatrice, someone as perfect as I became even more perfect. Thank you."

"Beatrice foreverrrrrr. Sobbbbbbb."

Looking around, I noticed that almost every student except Flora had tears in their eyes.

Damn it, I feel like I might start crying too. Why does this have to hit me right in the feels?!

Stunned and stopped in her tracks, Beatrice, with tears welling up in her eyes yet smiling, bowed to us all and then began walking away.

As her figure disappeared from view, the boys, including Agnos and Blud, started to move.

"Well... aniki. I'm heading off too."

"I need to return to my country immediately, to grasp the current situation a bit."

"Seiichi-san, you've been so helpful."

"Ah, thank you very much! Take care, everyone!"

Agnos waved energetically until the very end as he departed, while Blud walked away coolly yet gracefully. Berard and Leon seemed to be leaving together, chatting amiably as they went.

“Then we’ll be going tooo.”

“Thanks to you, sensei, I can use magic now, and I have become even more beautiful. Ah, but don’t fall in love with me, okay?”

“Seiichi foreverrrrrr. I’m sobbingggggg.”

Rachel and the others each said their farewells before boarding carriages bound for their hometowns and departing. Watching them go, I felt an emptiness inside, though, like Flora, I didn’t cry.

Being at this academy and spending every day with everyone had become such a routine that now, saying goodbye, I felt incredibly lonely.

Sensing my mood, Saria came over and comforted me gently.

“It’s okay. We’ll see them again!” said Saria.

“Really?”

“Of course! Because we’re all still alive, aren’t we?” She said with a chuckle, “Well, being dead would definitely be the end of that, wouldn’t it?”

I smiled at Saria’s blunt statement. *Wait a minute, I’ve been to the Underworld before... Maybe dying wouldn’t necessarily mean we couldn’t meet?*

Yeah, let’s drop that topic. It would ruin the emotional farewell.

As I watched the students leave, Barnabus approached quietly.

“Seiichi-kun. I regret that inviting you to this academy has led to this...”

“Don’t worry about it... I’m grateful that I came here.”

Since arriving in this world, I had the chance to meet Kannazuki-senpai and above all, I got to know everyone in Class F. I’d experienced so much and made unforgettable memories with them. It was an incredible journey, and I was thankful for every moment.

Al chimed in, “Due to my constitution, I rarely had the chance to engage in training the next generation. But I was truly happy to be able to teach about

adventurers at this academy. Thank you.”

“The cafeteria food was delicious,” Lulune remarked in typical fashion.

“This isn’t the time for jokes, Lulu!” Origa replied.

“I am quite serious, though!”

Barnabus, smiling gently, then turned his gaze to Zora and the others. “I’ve done Zora a disservice. Just as you were getting used to life at the academy...”

“No!” Zora interjected, “While it’s unfortunate, I am grateful to the headmaster for accepting someone like me!”

“It’s comforting to hear that... I also owe an apology to Louise and the others.”

“That’s unnecessary. As an outsider, I’m here by the headmaster’s kindness. I only have gratitude,” Louise replied, her voice sincere.

“I feel the same. I originally came here on a whim to follow Seiichi, and I’m grateful that I was allowed to stay. Thank you,” Routier added.

“Indeed,” Al shared with a chuckle, “it’s strange that Louise, a main force of the Windberg Kingdom, and Routier, the Demon King’s daughter, are here. Being with Seiichi tends to shatter all norms!”

I, too, struggle with shattered common sense.

“So, what will you do next, Seiichi?” Barnabus asked.

“Well... I haven’t decided what to do yet, so I might as well spend some time in Windberg’s Terbelle while I accompany Louise and the others. We’ll take things one step at a time.”

“Well then, the Kingdom of Windberg should be safe for a while, especially since you’re heading there, Seiichi.”

“Ahahaha... I wonder how much of a difference I can really make,” I replied, half joking. With former Heroes and the first Demon King around, it felt like everything would be all right no matter what happened.

Barnabus laughed at my response and then shifted his gaze elsewhere. “So... we have a rough idea of what you and your friends will do next, but what about

you, Helen?”

“Eh?” I instinctively followed Barnabus’s gaze, and there was Helen, seemingly deep in thought.

Huh? I thought she left with Rachel and the others... No, I guess Helen wasn’t with them.

It seemed I was the only one who hadn’t noticed she was still here; Saria and the others didn’t seem surprised at all. *How strange...*

While I was wondering why Helen had stayed behind—

“Seiichi-sensei,” she called out firmly, her expression resolute.

“Yes?”

“Please... make me stronger!”

“Yes?!” I echoed, taken aback by her sudden request. She then bowed deeply before me.

Chapter 16: Shadows Rise

“So, the school closed, and you and Seiichi came back?” King Landzelf of Windberg Kingdom pressed his temples, bewildered by Louise’s casual manner as she reported the news.

After a brief discussion about Helen’s emphatic request to be made stronger, Seiichi ended up bringing her with him, back to the Windberg Kingdom. Meanwhile, he decided to make a stop at Guild Headquarters to decide their next steps, and Louise had returned to the castle to let everyone know she was back.

“I mean, it’s already bizarre that you left your post as my guard to follow him... But isn’t this a bit too much freedom?” King Landzelf asked, his tone laced with incredulity.

“Please hear me out, Your Majesty. My level is over seven hundred now,” Louise replied, her expression serious.

“You’re not listening at all, are you?!” King Landzelf’s eyes widened in shock, his voice echoing through the throne room. “Seven hundred?! How on earth did you reach such an absurd level? I was shocked enough when you suddenly claimed to have become a Transcendent before!”

“When the master made the dungeon disappear, I was there with him, and that’s what happened,” Louise explained matter-of-factly.

“I don’t understand... What do you mean the dungeon disappeared? And Seiichi was involved?” He took a deep breath to calm himself. “Haah... I know you’re not one to joke, so it must be true... But what exactly is Seiichi? He always seemed to be hiding something about himself, but it’s clear he’s no ordinary person—he even saved me from an Anathema. Does he plan to keep hiding whatever it is about him...?”

“By the way, it seems that the master comes from the same hometown as the Heroes of the Kaizell Empire,” Louise added, her voice casual, yet hinting at

deeper significance.

“You’ve startled me enough, haven’t you?! So, Seiichi... he’s from another world?!”

“Apparently so. He wasn’t summoned to the Kaizell Empire like a Hero. Though he mentioned that... his abilities are far superior.”

“I didn’t even need to hear that. But stronger than a Hero, how does that even work? The Kaizell Empire must be in tears...”

King Landzelf leaned back into his chair with a expression weary.

“Ah... those people from the Kaizell Empire really don’t do anything properly... Summoning kids from another world as Heroes, declaring war on the entire world like this...”

“By the way... is our country all right? I mean, I’m here talking to you now, so I guess it’s fine, but I heard that almost every other country has fallen.”

At Louise’s question, Landzelf’s expression grew serious, his eyes clouded with concern.

“Yes, about that... We were also saved by Seiichi on that front.”

“What?”

“Do you remember when the Cult of the Wicked One attacked?”

“Yes.”

Louise’s expression changed as she recalled the incident. On the day the treaty between Windberg Kingdom and the demonkin realms was to be signed, the Cult of the Wicked One had led an army of monsters in an attack.

At that critical moment, both Windberg and the demonkin realms deployed all their forces, and with the cooperation of the Guild Headquarters, they fought the monstrous horde.

The true intent of some of the Cult’s Servants wasn’t just diversion; their real target was the daughter of the Demon King, Routier. Just when it seemed they had managed to fend off the Servants’ attack, they turned the tables, and Routier fell victim to an Anathema.

Due to the overwhelming numbers and extraordinary strength of the Servants, the S Class adventurers and Lousse were pushed to the brink, and it seemed Lousse would be defeated by a Servant's deadly blade.

But then, with the appearance of the first Demon King and the Dark Nobleman, Zeanos, who had been persuaded by Seiichi to migrate to Terbelle in Windberg, the tide of battle swiftly turned.

Zeanos's level surpassed fifteen hundred, a remnant of his monstrous past. Lucius, the first Demon King, and Abel, a former Hero, also possessed power near that level. Thanks to those three, the attack by the Servants was thwarted, and with Seiichi's magic from a conjured Treasure Chest, Routier had been safely awakened.

Landzef thought on her prior words. "Our soldiers, including the Black Paladin, are excellent. I can say that with pride. But it's a bitter pill to swallow when I hear that the entire military force of the Kaizell Empire has become Transcendents."

"I heard about that at the academy from a man named Zakia, the commander of the second division. It was true then."

"Yeah. And frankly, even though our soldiers are top-notch, this is something we just can't handle. The difference in levels due to stats isn't something easily overturned, and with the Guild Headquarters also being compromised in the war, things have gotten pretty tough. The Kaizell Empire has almost taken over all surrounding countries. There's no one left to rely on, and I thought we were done for. But..."

As Landzef spoke, he remembered the scene and gave a strained smile. "... Zeanos and Lucius, who had gotten jobs training the demonkin army under a pretense, took only their troops and charged at a Kaizell Empire army camped near Terbelle, driving them to retreat without suffering a single injury."

"What?" Lousse asked.

"Really, what's with those guys? Zeanos... I swear I've heard that name in some old books, and Lucius is supposedly the first Demon King? It's all just absurd..."

“You must be exhausted,” was all Louise could say in response. Perhaps she felt pity.

“Nah, it’s fine. Thanks to them, the Kaizell Empire has stepped back from Windberg Kingdom, and now we can live in peace like this. Oh, and Robert and the others got here just before you came back. They’re resting now.”

“Is that so...? Then, as the commander of the Kaizell Empire’s second division said, the other students were able to return home safely.”

Even though Zakia had verbally confirmed it, without physical verification, Louise hadn’t been certain. Yet, knowing that a prince from an invaded country had safely returned like this allowed her to assume that other students had likely made it back in similar safety.

“Well, a lot has happened here while you were gone... Louise, you must be well aware, right? Especially since they even went to take over the Barbodel Magic Academy, which used to be neutral,” Landzelf said.

“Yes. Because of them, my master and others had to leave the academy. It was unforgivable,” Louise replied.

“You’ve really changed, haven’t you? Or rather, when it comes to Seiichi, you prioritize him even over your duties as a guard... Knowing the old you, this is quite moving,” Landzelf observed.

“Is that so? Isn’t it natural for a disciple to think of their master?” Louise asked.

“Ah, what you’re motivated by, and the fact that you don’t even know what those feelings are... There’s nothing I can say if you don’t know. I ought to teach that to Florio...” Landzelf trailed off.

Louise tilted her head, puzzled by the king’s words. *What did he mean by that?* The reason she had developed such a deep fixation on Seiichi might come to light later. For now, she couldn’t even name her feelings for him.

“Never mind that. So, what’s he up to now?” Landzelf asked.

“Who?”

“Seiichi. You came back with him, didn’t you?”

“Yes, if you mean my master—” Louise replied, a hint of a smile on her face.

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“Wow, Seiichi, Altria, Saria! Long time no see! How do you like my muscles?” Gars exclaimed, striking a pose as usual.

“Is that really the first thing you should ask?” I replied, laughing.

Upon my return to the Guild Headquarters, Gars, dressed only in his boomerang pants, greeted me in his usual manner.

After Helen expressed her desire to become stronger, we had returned to Windberg’s capital, Terbelle. Louise went to report to King Landzelf, and we headed to the Guild Headquarters to gather information, including what to do about Helen’s training. We also hoped they could provide some insight into the current world situation. Additionally, Helen needed to register with them if she was to join us going forward.

We also needed to check in on Zeanos, my father, and the others later. Routier would probably be curious about how the demonkin army was doing, and Saria would likely want to visit Lord Adramelc and some others.

As it had been a while since my last visit to the Guild, I looked around, appreciating the familiarity I felt there.

“Destruction! Destruction! Destruction!” someone was saying. “But I’m more concerned about what’s going on with the folks back at the branch.”

“Well then... today in the square, my naked body will...” someone else trailed off.

“Slan-san, aren’t you going to take off your socks?”

“Hm? Oh... my, my... I’ve been distracted by the concerns of the branch. And it seems Walter-san has been keeping his distance from the young children...”

“Ah, how embarrassing... Lately, I find myself zoning out more often than not...”

Everyone seemed to be living true to their desires, but somehow their energy seemed off.

Noticing my puzzled look, Gars gave a wry smile.

“Hmm... it seems you’ve noticed something isn’t right with us.”

“Ah... really? It feels like everyone’s a bit low on energy, or something like that...” I said, concerned.

I mean, too much energy could also be problematic, especially for this lot.

Seeing this group of people so downcast was disconcerting. They used to smile even when armies of monsters attacked.

“Everyone seems a bit down. What happened?” asked Saria.

“Saria’s right, what’s going on? Even your complexion’s lost its luster... Weren’t you always going on about your muscles and skincare?”

“Ah... Well, it’s somewhat related to why you guys came back here.”

“Eh? Our reason for coming back?”

Gars continued, looking unusually serious, “The Kaizell Empire has declared war on the world, and nearly all countries have fallen under their control. Now, only the Kingdom of Windberg, the Varcia Empire, the demonkin realms, and the Eastlands remain. Fortunately for us, we have Zeanos and his friends here. We owe them a great debt for their help during the attack by the Cult of the Wicked One. Their presence has allowed us to enjoy some peace, but it is only temporary...”

That means that the Kaizell Empire might be planning something else.

“Anyway, recently, all of the Kaizell Empire soldiers have become Transcendents. I don’t know what method they used, but it’s not something we can ignore. Without Zeanos and his group, the world would likely have been conquered already. Although this country’s Guild is safe, there are many branches worldwide. With so many nations now under the Kaizell Empire’s control, we’ve lost contact, making it difficult to gather information.”

“Right...” It seemed the unusual atmosphere inside the Guild was due to concerns about the status and well-being of the people in other branches.

Gars then turned his attention to Helen and her group. “I notice there are a couple of unfamiliar faces here, but I’m really curious as to why the daughter of the Demon King is present...”

“Umm... as a bodyguard and companion, she’s been with us at the Barbodel Magic Academy since the Cult of the Wicked One attacked,” I tried to explain.

“I don’t get it! Hahaha!”

Helen, who had been watching us silently, suddenly addressed Gars, “You’re the Guild master here, aren’t you?”

“Hmm? Well, yeah, that’s true! Though I mainly just focus on my muscle training!” Gars replied with a chuckle.

“That’s not something to brag about,” Helen said with a roll of her eyes.

“Okay, I want to ask one thing... Based on the Guild’s information, how long can the Varcia Empire hold out against the Kaizell Empire?”

“Hmm... You’re from the Varcia Empire, aren’t you?”

“Yeah...”

“Let me be frank. The fate of the Varcia Empire is basically in the hands of the Kaizell Empire now.”

“What?! Why?”

“It’s simple. The soldiers of the Varcia Empire are formidable, and the Empress is a renowned powerhouse, but...” There was an uneasy pause. “Even so, there’s no way the Varcia Empire can win against the Kaizell Empire, which now has an army of Transcendents exceeding their forces in number.”

“There are forests similar to the one here, like the Sealed Forest near the Varcia Empire. Does that matter?”

“You’ve heard, haven’t you? The Kaizell Empire has become so strong that they no longer need to concern themselves with the forests or seas of this country. That’s why they have brought their invasion efforts here as well. The same holds true for the Varcia Empire.”

Helen fell silent, bowing her head.

I still don't fully understand why, but Helen is in a rush to become stronger, whether for her own sake or for someone else's...

As an awkward silence fell among us, Gars cheerfully broke the mood. "Anyway, let's be happy about the reunion for now! So, will you and the other girl, that one over there, be registering with the Guild?" He nodded toward Zora.

"Me? What should I do...?" Zora was flustered, but Routier watched her with a fond smile.

"Do what you like. You can now make your own choices," I encouraged her.

"My own choices..." After a moment of hesitation, she gave a small nod. "Um... I would like to register with the Guild!"

"I will too. It's more convenient Seiichi-sensei said..." Helen added.

"Is that so? Then let's get the registration done quickly! Eris! Eriiis!" Gars called out to someone behind the counter, and a voice responded, "Yes! Just one moment, please!"

"Wait, I'm sorry, but hang on. So, it's not just the demonkin princess, but also that girl from the Varcia Empire and a serpentkin child... Quite a diverse group you're gathering here, aren't you?" Gars asked with a grin.

"Indeed..." I suddenly realized that our current group included a "human" (monster), a gorilla, a former calamity, a donkey, a former assassin, Medusa, and the Demon King's daughter. *Are Al and Helen the only "normal" ones here? Is this normal? Isn't this just too absurd?*

While we waited for Eris to arrive, Helen and Zora introduced themselves. Eventually Eris, in her formal receptionist attire, made her way over. "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting."

"No, no, it's fine. And it's been a while," I said.

"Eris, long time no see!"

"Have you been well?" I asked.

Eris smiled sweetly, looking nothing like the sadomasochistic queen we knew. "Yes! I'm glad to see everyone is doing well. And there seem to be some new

faces...”

“Oh, we’d like to register these two, please.” Gars nodded toward Helen and Zora.

“Certainly. If you two could please come this way...” Zora and Helen followed Eris’s lead and completed some paperwork, smiling brightly.

“There, Helen and Zora’s provisional registrations are complete.”

“*Provisional* registration?”

“Oh, right, I forgot about that...” Helen looked puzzled, as I remembered that registering with this Guild wasn’t as straightforward as just filling out paperwork.

“Yes, we assign an examiner to everyone who does a provisional registration here, to assess their suitability. Not everyone registered here is necessarily combat proficient,” Eris explained.

“In that case, it’s actually perfect! We have Altria here. She could oversee their assessment,” I suggested, turning to Altria.

“Well, I don’t mind. Are you two okay with that?” Altria asked.

“I don’t have a problem with it...” Helen replied.

“I’m okay too!” Zora added.

“All right, then let’s get the test over and done with. Hey, Gars, got any good requests for a test?” I asked.

“Of course! Like when Seiichi registered, I have some almost impossible tasks here for these members!” Gars exclaimed.

“What kind of requests are those?! Wait, it’s nothing dangerous, right?” Helen asked, suddenly looking concerned.

“Nah, nothing dangerous. While Guild members are first-class in combat, for example like Altria, when it comes to gathering or menial tasks, it’s fair to say they’re hopeless! Those requests get left untouched because no one wants to do them!” Gars explained.

“I’m flattered, really,” Altria said with a chuckle.

“There’s nothing flattering about that!” Gars retorted, laughing.

While they laughed with one another, other Guild members who had been listening joined in with a smile and a thumbs-up.

Ah... Right, the tasks I did weren’t anything the people here would typically handle... except for the slime extermination. Demolishing buildings is a bit iffy too. And walking a dog... it was slightly different, but walking Milk the same way, we’d likely get turned away at the entrance because of how we were dressed, and our barely concealed perversion. And the worst would be the orphanage request. Especially Walter! That man would end up needing military supervision. A pervert like that shouldn’t be allowed near orphans.

Saria seemed to recall a similar memory too and smiled warmly. “I wonder how everyone at the orphanage is doing. I hope Clare is good too...”

“Right, neechan. Maybe we can visit them later with Seiichi and everyone?” Origas suggested.

“Yeah, we should do that!” I agreed.

That might actually be a good idea. Too much dark shit has been going on recently; we could use some healing. Kids are cute and soothing, right? We just need to make sure Walter doesn’t go!

Altria let out a deep sigh as she looked around at the Guild members, scratching her head.

“Ah well, can’t be helped. If you think about it, this kind of task is perfect for these guys.” She turned and called out, “Hey, Seiichi!”

“Huh?”

“I’ll take these two and get the test done quickly. You go get us rooms at The Tranquil Tree,” Altria instructed.

“Got it.”

“Thanks. And about the room assignments... there’s no need to split by gender since both Saria and I are there,” Altria added, blushing.

“Wha?!” I exclaimed, surprised by her sudden blush.

Altria hurriedly left the Guild with Helen and the others.

Well, when we stayed at The Tranquil Tree before, I shared a room with Saria, so it shouldn't be a problem...

But it's embarrassing to see Altria react like that.

Gars and the others quietly watched the scene unfold. He commented wistfully, "Altria has really become quite adorable, hasn't she?"

"Yeah. It's hard to imagine she's the same person as before."

After splitting up from Altria and the others, I started to head toward The Tranquil Tree, but Gars stopped me.

"Seiichi."

"Hmm?"

"That girl earlier... Helen, she said she wanted to become stronger, right?"

"Yeah, she did..."

"Just checking, but is she actually good at fighting?"

"Well..." I hesitated, unsure how to respond.

I took a moment to reflect on my previous battles with Helen. Among Class F, she clearly stood out with her combat skills, showing signs of training in various martial arts, much like Rachel did. However, while Rachel specialized in spear techniques, Helen seemed to know an unusually wide array of martial arts. Considering her movements in battle, she was undoubtedly strong, far stronger than I was before my evolution.

"Helen's one of the top fighters in the academy... I genuinely think she's strong," I finally said.

"Is that so..." Gars murmured, his brow furrowing in thought.

Finding his contemplation odd, I cocked my head just as Eris suddenly spoke up. "Ah... Gars, you're not thinking of sending them to *that* place, are you?"

"Indeed, I am," he replied hesitantly, nodding.

Eris looked stern as she objected, “Gars, that’s far too dangerous. They’ve just registered today.”

“But according to the Guild’s rules, it’s open rank. We can’t stop them from going,” Gars argued.

“But still...”

“With Seiichi and Altria here, it should be fine. Right, Seiichi?” Gars turned to me for confirmation.

“What are you talking about?” I frowned, feeling frustrated at being drawn into a conversation with no context. *What’s he planning?*

Gars laughed heartily, showing no sign of discomfort. “Ha ha ha! My apologies! It seems Helen wants to become stronger, so I thought of providing a place suitable for that.”

“A place?” I asked, still confused. What was he talking about?

As I and the rest of the group exchanged confused glances, Gars maintained a serious expression.

“Indeed, apart from the invasion by the Kaizell Empire, another event has occurred here in Terbelle.”

“Another event?” we all echoed in unison, intrigued.

“Yes—a dungeon has appeared.”

“WHAT?!”

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“And so, they’re gone,” Barnabus mused as Seiichi and the others returned to the Windberg’s royal capital and began to settle into their new lives. He, too, needed to decide on his next steps. “I never imagined this place would disappear... What is to become of the world now...?”

As a magic user of the highest caliber, Barnabus possessed skills that were highly sought after by adventurers and nations alike, so under normal circumstances, he wouldn’t need to worry about his future.

With so many nations now under the control of the Kaizell Empire however, and even the guilds barely functioning, Barnabus found himself constrained. Moving to the Varcia Empire or the Kingdom of Windberg could increase his risk of being targeted by the Kaizell Empire, who could find his powers threatening.

“Well, it might be too late now,” he sighed. After receiving what could hardly be called a diplomatic notice from Zakia, the commander of the Kaizell Empire’s second division, it was clear that Barnabus was already deemed a threat by the empire.

Yet, despite the looming threats, Barnabus felt no urge to serve any country. His years at the Barbodel Magic Academy, the only institution in the world that boasted true neutrality, were too precious to him. It had become the most cherished time of his life.

As an elf who lived for many ages, Barnabus always found it inspiring to watch the young generations grow and thrive. “To have even that future taken away...” he lamented, realizing that he might never witness such a scene again. With the Kaizell Empire’s control over Barbodel Magic Academy, neutrality in the world had vanished, leaving only submission or rebellion. The youth under the Empire and its dominated nations would likely no longer have the freedom to choose their own futures.

“My strength... Was I so powerless?” For Barnabus, known as the Great Sage and revered as one of the world’s pinnacle magic users, this was the first time he truly felt helpless.

Yet, he knew he could not afford to dwell on this indefinitely. Experience had taught him the necessity of reconciling his feelings and looking forward, and despite everything, he still believed in the potential of the younger generation.

“From here on, it is the youth who must make their choices. I can only believe that there will be light behind those choices,” he quietly affirmed, turning his gaze toward the academy.

With resolute steps, Barnabus moved toward where the Servants of the Cult of the Wicked One were being detained. The prior arrangement had been to hand them over to the Kaizell Empire, which included Zakia. While facing Demioros and Angreia alone posed a significant risk due to their formidable

abilities, the situation had changed; Demioros's once overwhelming power had waned, and Angreia, affected by betrayal, had shown a friendly demeanor toward Barnabus and his allies, reducing any threat substantially.

No longer the headmaster but still driven by duty, Barnabus considered addressing the issue with the Servants crucial, independent of any dealings with the Kaizell Empire. "Their existence poses a problem far beyond just us or the Kaizell Empire—it threatens our entire planet. If their desires are fulfilled, only a void will remain."

Approaching the heavily fortified basement door known only to a few within the academy, Barnabus did not hesitate. He pushed it open, prepared to confront whatever lay beyond, driven by a sense of duty to more than just his former charges but to the world itself.

Then—

"Ah, it seems the master of this place has returned," said a voice, chilling in its cheerfulness.

"What?! Who are you?!" Barnabus exclaimed.

Standing before the cage where Demioros and the others were imprisoned was Yutis, a Servant of the Cult of the Wicked One, wearing his usual eerie smile.

"You... Who are you?! Step away from that cage at once!" Barnabus demanded, his voice echoing in the chamber. He immediately invoked a spell, aiming to restrain Yutis. True to his title of Great Sage, Barnabus unleashed the high-level light magic spell Seal of Light; the same one he had once used on Demioros.

The speed of his spellcasting was incomparable to that of ordinary magic users, too fast for any normal human to react.

Unfortunately, Yutis was no ordinary human.

"Such a violent welcome," he remarked calmly.

"What?! *How?!*" Barnabus gasped in shock.

As the Seal of Light approached Yutis, it was absorbed by a dark mist emanating from his body and, inexplicably, reappeared around Barnabus instead.

“What is this—”

“Please, stay calm,” Yutis said as the spell, now beyond Barnabus’s control, bound him within a ring of light. “Perhaps you should have chosen your opponent more wisely, Great Sage.”

“What are you... What in the world are you?!” Barnabus demanded, pain twisting his features.

Yutis’s smile deepened and he performed a graceful bow.

“My apologies for the lack of introduction. I am Yutis, Omnipresence of the Cult of the Wicked One. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“Omnipresence... What does that even mean...?” The words were nearly lost on Barnabus.

Yutis just smiled, offering no further explanation.

Suddenly, he turned his gaze toward Demioros, who was muttering something incoherently inside the cage, and his eyes widened in surprise.

“What the hell is going on here? This is nothing like the Demioros I know... and like the Wicked One said, I can’t feel his power at all...”

Turning his attention to Angreia, who sat quietly in another cage, his expression soured further.

“And why is this failed Servant unharmed? I still have a lot of questions, but it seems my Transference isn’t effective regarding this matter either. Having my powers sealed repeatedly like this... It’s quite infuriating.”

As he spoke, a murderous aura filled the space—palpable even to Barnabus, who shuddered under its intensity.

Yutis’s face lit up with an idea. He stepped toward Barnabus.

“Indeed, if I cannot jump to that place myself, then I shall simply peek into your memories. It will be over quickly. I will just make a small leap into your

consciousness.”

“What are you planning to do? Stop! Halt this at once!”

Barnabus tried desperately to wriggle away, even as he was bound by the Seal of Light, but Yutis grabbed his head firmly.

“Let’s see then, what exactly happened on the day Demioros attacked this academy... I shall witness everything.”

As Yutis closed his eyes, Barnabus’s consciousness fell under his control.

For a while, Yutis remained motionless in the same position, but then he suddenly opened his eyes.

As Barnabus’s memories were invaded, he began sweating profusely and gasping for breath.

There was a reason why Barnabus was so exhausted from having his memories searched. This power Yutis exhibited didn’t just cause his subjects to vividly recall their memories; they relived the experiences as well.

In other words, Barnabus had once again felt the pain and torment inflicted by Demioros as if it were happening all over again.

And it wasn’t just once.

Yutis repeatedly poured over that specific memory segment to understand who had defeated him. As a result, Barnabus kept experiencing intense pain and a sense of powerlessness throughout his body. This technique would easily have left the average person catatonic from the agony inflicted. Barnabus wouldn’t have been able to pull through either, had it not been for his incredible mental fortitude and resolve.

Yet, Yutis, unbothered by the weakened state of Barnabus, stared at his own hand in disbelief at what was happening to him.

“Absurd... I can’t even trace a memory? What in the world is going on...?”

Yutis, who could exist simultaneously across past, present, and future—spanning all times, dimensions, and worlds when exerting his power—had been chosen as a Servant precisely because of this formidable ability, which the power of the Wicked One had enhanced greatly.

Confronted with a situation where his cherished power was entirely ineffective, he felt a mix of astonishment, anger, and even fear. Shaking his head as if to flee from those feelings, he reasoned, “I must not be afraid. To fear would be to admit that the Wicked One’s power is ineffective. It’s all right, my inability to see is just a deficiency in my own power. The Wicked One would undoubtedly be able to erase that existence without even needing to see it. For now, I must report this...”

As he snapped his fingers, the same black mist that had erased Barnabus’s Seal of Light appeared and enveloped both Demioros and Angreia in the cage.

“Impossible, impossible, impossible, impossible...” Barnabus muttered.

“What?! This is—”

“You two are valuable specimens. Rest up while you’re transported.”

With another snap of his fingers, the cage was suddenly empty, and both Demioros and Angreia had vanished.

“What have you done with them?!”

As Barnabus scowled in frustration, Yutis whispered devilishly, “Don’t worry. I’ve implanted a Seed within the small desire for power that resides in your heart.”

“What have you—”

Before Barnabus could demand further explanation, Yutis snapped his fingers and vanished from sight, just as Demioros and the others had.

Chapter 17: Delving Deep: Dungeon Intel and Guild Test

“A new... dungeon?” I asked, surprised.

“Yes, that’s right,” Gars replied, nodding solemnly.

“It appeared recently... right after the first Demon King and Zeanos repelled the invasion of the Kaizell Empire.”

“Do dungeons just appear out of nowhere like that?” I asked. I remembered Barnabus saying that dungeons appearing wasn’t a common occurrence...

Gars gave a wry smile and shook his head. “Unfortunately, dungeons don’t appear as easily as you might think, Seiichi. It’s truly a rare event. It’s been decades since a new dungeon popped up... and even by the standards of Windberg’s history, it’s ancient.”

I couldn’t help but think, *Isn’t it strange to encounter such rare events twice? And they’re not exactly the kind of thing you’d be happy about, right? I mean, I suppose adventurers would be thrilled, but generally, I’d rather avoid danger. I mean, I guess it’s a bit late for that now.*

“Wait a minute, wasn’t there talk of two more dungeons needing to be conquered soon? One was the Demon King’s Dungeon, and the other was the Wicked One’s Dungeon...” *What if those are dungeons we can’t conquer? I think we could handle the monsters and traps... but actually conquering a dungeon would involve luck and other unknown factors.*

“That’s why, even if we were to try this dungeon, we may not be able to conquer it,” I said aloud. “That sheep guy may be annoying, but I don’t think he lies about this kind of thing.” I added, curious, “By the way, do you know why the dungeon appeared, or what caused it? Normally, dungeons are dangerous, and I think it’s quite risky to address them without understanding the cause...”

“On that point, we suspect the Kaizell Empire is involved,” Gars replied.

“The Kaizell Empire?” I repeated, surprised. *Those guys, again?*

“Yeah. As I was saying earlier, we don’t know exactly what method they used, but all their soldiers have become Transcendents, monstrous beings with levels over 500. Only a cursed artifact that requires a sacrifice to activate, or a magical artifact of world treasure class, could give them that kind of power. It’s possible that humans under the influence of one of these artifacts congregated in one place, however briefly, which affected the land somehow.” Gars added, “This is the Guild’s viewpoint, so we can’t say it’s absolutely correct, but if similar cases have been happening elsewhere following the Kaizell Empire’s invasions, it’s probably no coincidence.”

It’s not just the Kingdom of Windberg that the Kaizell Empire has attacked... So, dungeons might be appearing in other countries too... If that’s really the case, what a nuisance!

“Okay, I think I understand the dungeon’s emergence now, but is this dungeon completely new? I heard that sometimes new dungeons can be gateways to existing dungeons,” I asked.

“Yep, we’ve looked into that, and it appears to be a completely new dungeon for now. Of course, there might be hidden doors leading to other dungeons,” Gars replied.

“I see... But why tell us this? What does it have to do with Helen wanting to become stronger?”

“That’s because, Seiichi, the difficulty level of this dungeon is incredibly high. The levels of the monsters appearing inside are extraordinarily high.”

“So, it’s that dangerous?”

In the usually lighthearted atmosphere, Gars’s serious demeanor really underscored the danger of the dungeon.

As he continued, not only did I straighten up, but Saria and the others did as well. He seemed to believe that this dungeon was a perfect opportunity for someone who wished to grow stronger, like Helen.

“However, whether she can become a Transcendent by surpassing Level 500 depends on her. But honestly, I’m not too worried about that. With a strong will

to become powerful, and the muscles to support that will, surpassing human limitations should be easy!” Gars said. He struck a pose, his teeth shining brightly. While his words seemed reasonable, it was hard to take him too seriously... given how he was dressed and how he kept talking about muscles.

“Humans are strange creatures,” Routier mused. “We demonkin don’t have a specific limit to our levels, but humans do. Yet, it’s precisely because of that limit that they excel in group combat and are so formidable... If humans become Transcendents, surpassing their status limitations, no other race would stand a chance. Maybe that’s why those limitations exist. It seems there’s something that can remove those limits... Hmph. Humans other than our master are fundamentally too weak.”

“That’s pretty harsh, even for a demonkin. Labeling Seiichi as a ‘human’ makes it rough on other humans,” Saria chimed in.

“Should I be feeling sorry for myself?!” I couldn’t help but interject. *Being categorized as a “human” in status but living a different experience is so confusing!*

Then Saria, with her pure curiosity, asked, “By the way, why did Eris try to stop us from going to that dungeon?”

Eris sighed deeply before responding, “Do you know how dungeons are classified within the Guild, Seiichi?”

“Eh?” That made me realize... I didn’t actually know.

Because I was suddenly sent to the Black Dragon God’s Dungeon during the Guild registration exam, and later visited it again on a mission after being hired by Barbodel Magic Academy, I never really had to concern myself with the Guild’s classifications. *Well, I guess it’s more accurate to say I didn’t know there were classifications to consider.*

“Understand this: typically, the Guild sets ranks for missions to determine whether they can be completed. S Rank missions can only be undertaken by S Rank adventurers. Conversely, the kind of trial missions that Helen and her group are doing right now are rank free... meaning anyone who’s registered with the Guild can accept them. You’re aware of those rules, aren’t you?” Gars explained.

“Yes,” I replied.

“As for dungeons, there are fundamentally no such ranks directly associated with them,” Gars continued.

“Really?”

Gars started, “One can imagine a wealthy client requesting rare items from dungeons... But anything found in dungeons, whether it’s monster materials or treasures, belongs to whoever discovers it. This rule exists because dungeons are seen as places of great allure and opportunity for adventurers, promising fortunes.”

“That makes sense... At first, I thought adventurers just made their living selling monster materials,” I said. “The only reason I registered with the Guild was to get an ID. I never imagined it was a place where people chase dreams of striking it rich.”

“So, what exactly are the dreams and goals of the people in this Guild?” I asked everyone, curious.

“Our dreams? Naturally, to live out our desires.”

“YES, FREEEEEEDOM!”

“Adventurers should just quit.”

Where in this Guild can one find adventurers dreaming of dungeon riches? All I see are eccentrics everywhere.

Gars coughed, and continued, “I got a bit sidetracked, but essentially, dungeons are places filled with dreams. When a new dungeon appears, we have higher-ranked adventurers do a preliminary check of the monster levels inside, and then we open it up to all adventurers,” Gars explained.

“Eh? That means...” I started.

“Right, there’s no rank restriction for entering dungeons,” Gars confirmed.

“That’s why it’s so dangerous. There are a lot of young adventurers who go into dungeons that are way beyond their capability and end up losing their lives...” Eris added, her voice filled with concern. “That’s why I’m against Helen

and them going into this new dungeon. Even if Altria and Seiichi are strong, this time it's excessively dangerous!"

Hearing Eris's unusually flustered response filled me with unease. After all, both Gars and Eris had previously dived headfirst into a horde of S Rank monsters without hesitation.

The fact that these two were perceiving this new dungeon with such a high level of danger was alarming...

As the conversation unfolded, a question popped into my mind. "But if it's so dangerous and adventurers are losing their lives, why not impose some entry restrictions?"

It seemed like a logical suggestion to me, but Gars shook his head. "Do you think it's right to stop people from chasing their dreams?"

"What?" I replied, taken aback.

Gars looked at me kindly as he continued, "There's no nobility or lowliness in dreams. The dream of making money is as legitimate as any other. Everyone has their reasons. Some people might need money urgently. How many ways can one earn a substantial sum of money quickly like that? Adventurers have got to be free. And with that freedom comes a price and responsibility—namely, their own lives."

His insight left me breathless.

"They stake their lives to pursue those dreams. The Guild won't stop them. Instead, we do what we can to help them, whether it's through providing information or networking. That's the purpose of the Adventurers' Guild," he added.

I was struck by his words. I had never deeply considered the essence of being an "adventurer," and this was a revelation to me. It sounded incredibly noble, and I couldn't help but feel a bit inspired.

Seeing my reaction, Gars gave a shy smile. "Well, despite what I've said, while Eris might personally object to you entering the dungeon, we won't stop you."

“Reluctantly, I agree,” Eris chimed in. “As someone who used to be an adventurer, I understand personal circumstances and the desire to chase dreams.”

Gars and Eris had provided as much insight as they could muster. Of course, the decision would ultimately be Helen’s, but after I heard their words, I was almost certain she would choose to venture into the dungeon. So, as her former teacher, all I could think about was...

“Hey, Gars,” I said.

“Hm? What’s up?”

“About the dungeon. Can we get some information? Like the level of the monsters that appear, types of traps, and other details that might be important?”

“Sure.”

Gars nodded to Eris, who promptly went to fetch some documents from the back of the Guild.

I wondered what level of monsters we might encounter. Given the extent of Gars’s caution, it must have been a significant threat.

When I asked about it, Gars informed me that the highest-level monster they’d encountered was a Murder Mantis at Level 600. This surprised me—was that level supposed to be intimidating? My perceptions might have been skewed by the monsters we’d faced before.

“Sorry, Gars. Could you repeat that level?” I asked, hoping I’d misheard.

“Six hundred,” he confirmed.

“It wasn’t just me then?!” I blurted out. It appeared a Level 600 monster was incredibly high. My sense of scale was definitely off after dealing with Zora’s dungeon.

Seeing my reaction, Gars chuckled. “It seems that even you, Seiichi, are taken aback by that level.”

“Well, that... Isn’t it a bit low?” Origa chimed in unexpectedly.

“Origa-chan?!” I couldn’t help but retort, but Gars had heard it too and was now staring at her in astonishment.

“Origa, did you just say the level is low?” Gars asked, bewildered.

“Yes, I did,” Origa confirmed nonchalantly.

“And you’re not mistaken? We’re talking about Level 600 here, a level that would crush even Transcendents, right?” Gars pressed.

“I’m at Level 850,” Origa stated matter-of-factly.

Gars’s eyes widened in shock. “What does that even mean?!” he exclaimed, grabbing my shoulder in his confusion.

“Seiichi, what’s going on?! Origa’s level is 850?! That’s beyond even Transcendent status, isn’t it?” he questioned in disbelief.

“Yeah, last I heard she was at Level 710, but she leveled up,” I explained casually.

Gars’s face turned bright red. “That’s not the point! Even before leveling up, she was at 710?!” he was almost shouting, baffled by the revelation.

“What in the world has happened to you all in such a short time?! Even my muscles haven’t heard of this!” Gars exclaimed, his eyes wide with astonishment.

“Well, it’s not something you’d usually discuss with your muscles, right?” I replied with a chuckle, and briefly explained the events that had transpired at Barbodel Magic Academy, including our encounter with Zora.

“My word... I’ve been a Guild master for many years, but I’ve never encountered anyone as extraordinary as this! What’s this about erasing dungeons? Even with all my muscle, that’s impossible!” Gars said, shaking his head in disbelief.

“Right?!” I agreed. It really shouldn’t be possible. The fact that we did it made us the odd ones out.

As we talked, Gars became serious, his expression turning thoughtful. “I’ve always been aware of Seiichi’s potential, but if it weren’t for the mess with the Kaizell Empire, you would have already earned a nickname.”

“Eh, you mean...” I trailed off, a sense of trepidation growing inside me.

Gars confirmed my fears with a cheerful smile. “You would have joined our ranks as an S Class!”

“That’s exactly what I don’t want!” I protested, my mind racing with the implications. Being counted among the perverts... *Please spare me that! Although I guess it might already be too late.*

Eris returned with the dungeon files. “Here you are... Oh? What happened? The mood was quite somber just a moment ago...”

“Listen, Eris! Guess what level Origa is,” Gars turned to her with excitement, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

“Oh? Well... She hadn’t reached five hundred before, so perhaps around 480 at most?” Eris guessed, her brow furrowed in thought.

“Eight hundred and fifty, actually!” Gars exclaimed.

When Origa approached Eris to show her status, Eris became serious. “It seems I, too, have become muscle-brained,” she remarked after verifying the unbelievable level of 850.

“That’s the best news, isn’t it?” Gars chimed in cheerfully.

“Please, keep your muscles quiet,” Eris retorted, still engrossed in Origa’s stats, rechecking them multiple times before sighing deeply. “It truly seems to be genuine. And if Origa is like this, might everyone else be similarly leveled? What exactly have you all been doing to achieve this...?”

“Oh, that’s because...” I began explaining to Eris what I had told Gars earlier, and she laughed it off as if she had finally come to terms with something beyond her comprehension.

“It’s out of my hands now.”

“I’m sorry?” I blurted out a reflexive apology, though I wasn’t entirely sure what I was apologizing for.

As I pondered my own actions, Eris became serious again. “However, if Origa is at this level, then the new dungeon information I’m about to give you might

not be wasted. The dungeon might even be at risk of being obliterated, just like you did in your earlier story...”

“I wouldn’t do that! Probably...” I replied.

“You already seem unsure about your own statement,” Eris pointed out with a slight smile.

It’s just that the whole dungeon-vanishing thing was an accident! I just wanted to show Zora the sky, you know? It was all from such a pure intention, and sadly, it led to a tragic end for the dungeon!

As Saria and Lulune chimed in about how incredible it was when I swung my sword and accidentally obliterated a dungeon, Eris looked even more dubious.

“Well, that’s fine,” she finally conceded. “If you all have such formidable power, there really shouldn’t be anything to worry about.”

“Yeah, hey, Seiichi,” Gars interjected, his voice serious.

“Hmm?” I replied, turning to him.

“I don’t know what kind of position Helen holds in the Varcia Empire or what feelings she harbors about the current situation, since we’ve only just met her. That’s why, just like with Altria before... I hope you can lend her a hand,” Gars said, a look of concern in his eyes.

“Yeah. If there’s anything I can do to help, I’ll give it my all,” I replied, determination in my voice.

And so, with dungeon information in hand and a commitment to help Helen as much as we could, we set off toward The Tranquil Tree, where we planned to meet up with Altria.

Side Story: Zora's Daily Life

I, Zora, have spent most of my life inside a dungeon. This is due to my unique physical trait... the ability to turn whatever I see into stone, which caused the entire serpentkin race to shun me and eventually seal me away. This power of mine was uncontrollable; it once ran amok and nearly turned even my own parents into stone. So, I chose to always keep my eyes closed to avoid hurting anyone and accepted being sealed away.

Once sealed, there was no need to be cautious of my surroundings, and when I opened my eyes... I was in a cold, quiet room made of stone. The room contained only a cross for sealing me and a few small torches for light. It was thanks to this room that I never got to enjoy the bright blue sky.

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"Good morning, Zora-chan!" Saria said with a warm smile.

"Good... good morning, Saria-san!" I managed to return the greeting, still getting used to social interactions.

Saria-san, Seiichi-san's wife, was a very kind person. She always cared for me, knowing I'd spent my entire life inside the dungeon. She was patient and understanding, and I was grateful for her company.

Continuing on from my days within the dungeon, thanks to Seiichi-san, I finally experienced the world beyond and the blue sky. I felt the wind's gentle touch, the warmth of sunlight, the earthy scent of grass and soil, and the bliss of human connection—all things I never thought I'd encounter. Now, I lived a fulfilling life every day. Even learning to greet others was a fresh experience for me. Though I still struggled with spontaneously greeting people, I found joy in being able to exchange words with them.

And above all, the happiest thing for me had been...

“Yep, Zora-chan seems to be getting used to it!”

“Do you think so?” I replied.

“Sure! Oh, we better hurry or we’ll be late!”

“Oh no! That would be terrible!” I said, smiling.

... living an ordinary life, which was once just a dream. *I can’t believe I’m finally living a normal life.* My gaze would mercilessly turn things to stone—a trait, not a curse, and one that no one could prevent or change. The fact that it changed with just a single item still amazed me.

When Saria and I arrived at the classroom, our classmates were chatting and laughing joyfully.

“Hey, isn’t my hairstyle incredibly stylish today?!”

“What’s different about it? It’s the usual.”

“Haha! You can’t see the difference? Look at this texture!”

“You can’t ‘see’ texture, can you?”

Agnos-kun and Blud-kun always argued, but they stuck together. I admired Agnos-kun for his bold and straightforward nature, which I struggled to emulate as I learned to express my emotions clearly. Blud-kun, like Agnos-kun, had his own firm beliefs and expressed them to others.

“Leon, your answer to that problem is wrong.”

“Really?”

“You should use this equation instead of that one.”

“Really? Thanks, Berard-kun!”

“Don’t mention it.”

In another corner, I noticed Leon-kun and Berard-kun reviewing calculations together. I’d always felt a bit of kinship with Leon-kun, who was a bit fearful and apologetic, but he appeared to be trying to change, smiling more frequently these days. *I should follow his example!*

Berard-kun always seemed calm, providing a sense of security and watching over everyone kindly. *I wonder... Can I ever become someone who brings comfort to others like that?*

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you! The grammar isn’t like that, it’s like this!”

“Um... and there’s a mistake in this problem too...”

“Even someone as perfect as me... I never thought I’d find my limit in teaching others.”

“Everyone’s so unforgiving! I’m really going to cry at this rate!”

Just like Leon-kun and his group, the girls were huddled together, apparently helping Flora-san with her studies.

Helen-san was assertive and clear in expressing herself, but still managed to convey kindness and consideration to others. Rachel-san always had a soft, gentle aura that made you feel at peace when you were with her. Irene-san could be a bit harsh with others, but she was even tougher on herself, always striving for perfection, which I truly admired.

Flora-san, who was currently receiving help from Helen and the others, was a wonderful person who brightened the atmosphere, making everyone laugh often.

When I first entered the classroom, the students were split into gendered groups, but soon they merged into one, eventually all chatting and laughing together.

“We need to study, or we won’t get good grades from Beatrice-san and the others... Well, fortunately, your grades are still average, not as hopeless as Agnos-kun’s...”

“Hey, I’m trying my best!”

“At least hold the textbook the right way up.”

“Wait, this is upside down?!”

“It’s hopeless.”

“Can you help this fool? We need more assistance here.”

“Umm... Tutoring Agnos-kun is a bit too much for me...”

“Even Rachel thinks that about me?!”

“I’m currently busy helping Flora. And even someone as perfect as me... I’m not sure I can improve Agnos-kun’s grades...”

“Can I cry now?”

“Well, well! I’m trying hard too, so let’s work together!”

While waiting for Seiichi-sensei to arrive, the class continued reviewing together.

Since I’d just come out of the dungeon, I didn’t have the academic skills to take tests yet, so I was exempt. I’d lived in the dungeon for so long that I lacked not just in academics but in common sense as well.

That’s why I needed to start learning the simple things first, but I’d heard that Saria-san and Lulune-san also had unique circumstances, and they needed to learn the common sense of this world too, which had surprised me.

When conversing with others, Saria-san seemed just like everyone else, and she was initially supposed to be exempt from the tests for the same reason as me. However, now she was among the top students, which was really impressive.

As for Lulune-san, everyone seemed to shake their heads when talking about her, but even so, she was better at studying than I was, which I found enviable.

As I watched everyone studying together, Flora-san noticed me.

“Ah, Zora-san! Would you like to study with us?”

“Huh? But... Are you sure? I don’t want to be a burden.”

“Of course not! You won’t be a burden at all! Right, everyone?”

“Yeah, sure. I don’t mind. Although Flora probably just couldn’t handle being taught alongside Agnos while being scolded,” said Irene with a smirk.

“H-How did you know?!” Flora squealed.

“You were too transparent... Besides, even if Zora joins in, your treatment won’t change.”

“Wait, what?!” both Flora and Agnos exclaimed simultaneously.

“Why are you two surprised? It’s only natural for Zora to be taught the basics, but you two have been attending this school and studying this whole time.”

“I was sleeping!”

“I didn’t get it even when I listened!”

“Right, I’ll report this to Beatrice-sensei later.”

“Please, nooooo!” the two begged desperately.

Watching the pair plead, I couldn’t help but laugh. Then, Saria came up behind me and placed her hand on my shoulder.

“How about it, Zora-chan? Having fun?”

“Yeah, lots.”

I never thought I’d be part of a group like this, happily chatting away. It was all thanks to Seiichi-san, who had freed me from the dungeon and had given me these glasses.

I didn’t know how much I could help him with my abilities, but I wanted to be able to assist him whenever he faced trouble. It was my way of repaying him for this wonderful life I was living now.

As everyone chatted merrily, Seiichi-san joined in, making the room even livelier. I smiled and cherished the experience.



Side Story: Seiichi from the Fortune Teller's Perspective

When I was young, I traveled the world with my parents, honing my skills as a fortune teller. When I reached the appropriate age, I enrolled at Barbodel Magic Academy, a school unaffiliated with any country. Having lived a life steeped in fortune telling, I found the school life refreshing.

I was enjoying my school days without using my fortune telling skills when the Cult of the Wicked One attacked the academy. But the attacker wasn't just anyone, he was a maniac who intended to kill us. His rampage was not merely one of malice—it was clearly part of some twisted game.

To make matters worse, during this time, I saw the Mark of Death appear on everyone around me, including myself. Some students, though trembling with fear, still clung to the hope that help would arrive and desperately tried to endure.

I had lost all such hope.

I hadn't seen the Mark of Death many times in my life, but each observation had come to pass with frightening accuracy. And it was clear to anyone who saw the Servant of the Cult of the Wicked One that he was powerful enough to kill us all right there.

He treated a woman, supposedly his ally, like trash, which only highlighted the brutality with which he might dispose of us...

It was over. There was no changing our fate. We were all going to die here.

Just as I had resigned myself to this grim fate—

“Uh, what's going on here?”

Suddenly, I noticed a suspicious man in a hood standing dumbfounded at the arena's entrance.

Upon closer inspection, the man turned out to be the homeroom teacher of Class F, who had previously overwhelmed the homeroom teacher of Class S. *How could the teacher of Class F be stronger than the teacher of Class S anyway...?*

As the Class F teacher surveyed the devastation within the arena, I was convinced that, regardless of who showed up, there would be no escaping this doomed future...

“Huh?”

I couldn’t believe my eyes.

The Mark of Death that had been so clearly visible on everyone suddenly vanished in an instant! No matter how many times I rubbed my eyes, I couldn’t see it. It was completely gone.

As I sat there bewildered, something even more astonishing happened.

The Servant, who had previously terrorized us with his overwhelming strength, now bore an unimaginable mark. It wasn’t a Mark of Death, but something far worse. A fate most terrifying and agonizing was about to befall him. But how could that be? There’s no way such a future could come true!

After all, that Servant possessed such immense power—

“Ah, ahhh, ahhhhhh! My arm’s goneeeeeeee?!”

For some reason, the Servant’s arm had vanished.

What happened?! Where did that Servant’s absolute power and confidence go?!

I stood there stunned, unable to process this series of events that had defied all my predictions. Before I knew it, the teacher of Class F had disappeared, leaving behind only the pitiful Servant.

And so, the attack by the Cult of the Wicked One ended in a series of unexpected events, but from that point on, I didn’t know where the teacher of Class F had vanished to.

Curious, I attempted a reading, but the result was something nonsensical, like “training in the Underworld,” so I eventually gave up investigating. Then, the

next time I noticed him, the Class F teacher was simply walking around the school again, and I just accepted that he was beyond my understanding.

Given that our classes were different and that there weren't continuous incidents like the one involving the Cult of the Wicked One, I was confident I wouldn't have any more interactions with him—or so I believed.

The attack by the Cult of the Wicked One had jeopardized the Barbodel Magic Academy's standing, resulting in many students leaving, and the school was enveloped in a gloomy atmosphere. To dispel this mood, the headmaster decided to hold a school festival, and our class agreed to participate.

When my classmates learned that I could do fortune telling, they thought it would make a unique attraction, so we decided to set up a fortune teller's booth with me as the main feature.

As the headmaster intended, the other students and I enjoyed the school festival—especially Class F's café, which became famous for its handsome boys and beautiful girls.

Ha ha, they should explode!

While I was waiting for customers and feeling a bit grumpy—the Class F teacher, whose whereabouts I had given up on, suddenly appeared.

“Ugh?!”

Why is he here?! Is he even interested in fortune telling?!

I thought some rude things like that, but then I saw that he had brought along an incredibly cute girl.

For a moment, I was flustered, but I quickly regained my composure, and began following the manual's instructions.

“Ah, welcome, welcome to our Fortune Teller's Booth... Have a seat right over here, please,” I guided them.

I continued, “Welcome. What shall I divine for you? The compatibility between you two? Your future? Or perhaps your essence?”

Since it was a school festival attraction, I could only offer simple fortune telling, but I could still check compatibility, take a brief glimpse into the future,

or divine their essence.

When it came time for each of them to make their choice, the girl wanted to check their compatibility, while the teacher opted to see his essence. While internally feeling a bit uncomfortable, I was actually pleased with the opportunity to try this kind of fortune telling.

“All right... Got it. Then, let me first divine your compatibility, as the young lady requested!” I said, placing my hands directly above their heads.

As an aside, people often asked why I didn’t use the crystal ball, but I didn’t need it to divine. In fact, I didn’t see the point in using one. If I were to divine seriously, I would use a different mineral, or primarily a magic circle.

Having a crystal ball made it look more legitimate to the general public, so it was there for show.

As expected, the teacher commented on not using a crystal ball, but before long, the result was clear.

“The compatibility between you two is exceptional! In fact, I have never seen a pair so well matched before! Your future together is secure, and a bright destiny awaits you both! May your lives together be explosively joyful, you *wonderful* souls!”

This was the truth. However, for some reason, the fortune also revealed: *“This match between the Human Lord and the Gorilla Lady is the best across all dimensions.”* What on earth does that mean? I wondered. Human Lord? And Gorilla Lady? Who is that? They both clearly look human to me. And across all dimensions? Since when did my fortune telling transcend dimensions?

As I was pondering this fortune, the couple began flirting in front of me, so I promptly put a stop to it.

“Umm!” I coughed with intent. “Could you please refrain from being so lovey-dovey here?!”

“Oh, s-sorry...”

“Well, that’s fine... Now, let’s take a look at the essence of this young man here.”

Finally, I had the opportunity to divine the essence of the teacher from Class F.

Perhaps now I could find some answers as to what had happened to the so-called Servant of the Cult of the Wicked One, and why I kept getting fortune telling results that I had never seen before.

Feeling unusually nervous, I began the process, when suddenly—

“Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat?!” I screamed.

There was no other reaction I could have had.

In a truly unprofessional manner for a fortune teller, I confronted the person directly with the absurdity of the result.

“What are you?! It’s like... I don’t even know how to put it, but it’s crazy! You’re a walking embodiment of all the potentialities of a human, but you deviate from the norms of this world. No, that’s not right. You exist on a level that could be considered parallel or even superior to many worlds or dimensions?! I... It’s almost blasphemous to even compare! Ah, shit! My vocabulary fails me! Who can even explain this?! What am I divining here?! Are you not human?! Why am I even doing this at a school festival?!”

Seriously! I’m just a fortune teller who happens to be doing this for the class attraction, and yet you have to go and undermine my identity like this?!

No matter how much I shouted, his fortune didn’t change. In fact, the result flooded my mind beyond what I could handle.

“Anyway! It’s impossible to divine you any further. In fact, no one can divine you! Even a god... Hmm?! Even a god can’t understand you?! So, what the hell are you?!”

Please stop confusing me even more!

While I was shouting, the teacher and the girl apparently left, for which I was truly thankful. I had to apologize to my classmates, but I closed the booth for the rest of the day. That’s how mentally exhausted I was.

Thankfully, they laughed it off and forgave me, so I went off to rest alone. They were really good people.

As soon as I was alone, I reconsidered those two people's fortunes.

First of all, what was he? Was he even human?

The answer seemed to be yes, he was human, but not an ordinary one.

According to the fortune telling results, he seemed to encompass all potential, and that potential was still growing. I was utterly baffled.

Even as I admitted my confusion, the information continued to perplex me.

While he was human, he existed as an entity greater than gods, akin to different dimensions or parallel universes. But there was nothing equivalent to him. *Was I talking about a human or something else entirely?*

As absurd as this teacher was, it seemed that even an omniscient and omnipotent god couldn't comprehend him. I wondered if I even understood what "omniscient and omnipotent" meant anymore.

Since when can fortune telling reveal this much detail? I wondered again. Although based on how I felt, clearly, it couldn't.

I had wanted to know about the F-Class teacher, but by now, I'd had my fill.

In the end, I didn't understand a thing.

If I had to force an answer, it would be that I understood that I didn't understand.

Oh, and there was one more thing I understood.

If you're that exceptional, you become popular.

I want to be popular too, damn it!

I sobbed and spent the rest of the school festival resting.

Back Matter

Author: Miku

Loves cold soba noodles. Likes both dogs and cats, but is allergic to both of them. Successfully moved to Tokyo. Managing to get by. (May 2019)

Illustrator: Umiko/U35

Born on November 17 in Shimane Prefecture. Likes potato dishes and summer skies. (May 2019)



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