



**7 SURVIVAL
IN ANOTHER
WORLD WITH MY
MISTRESS**

7 written by **RYUTO**
illustrated by **YAPPEN**
NOVEL

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SYLPHYEL

MELTY

"Come here,
Kousuke.
Here are your
favorite
breasts!"

"If you like
breasts so much,
have your way
with mine!"



AMALIE

ELEONORA

BELTA

KOUSUKE



SURVIVAL IN ANOTHER WORLD WITH MY MISTRESS

NOVEL
7

WRITTEN BY **Ryuto**
ILLUSTRATED BY **Yappen**



Seven Seas Entertainment

Goshuzinsama to yuku isekai survival Vol. 7
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Prologue:

Survival Amid Conspiring Nations!

HOWDY, KOUSUKE HERE. The very same Kousuke that stuck general-purpose machine guns on the magical equivalent of high mobility vehicles and then, alongside the harpies and their aerial bombs, annihilated the Holy Kingdom's 60,000-strong forces when they came knocking at Merinesburg's front door.

What's that? Taking down a military force of 60,000 with just a few dozen people is crazy talk? I totally get it, but at the end of the day, our level of firepower and mobility was at least ten times theirs, so... What can I say? Plus we had harpies manning the sky and our golem communicators, which allowed us to share info easily.

The Holy Kingdom basically bunched all of their men together in an attempt to crush us with numbers, which just so happened to make them a perfect target for machine guns and aerial bombs.

Anyhow, we managed to fight them off—well, more like annihilate them—which meant now we had cleanup in store after our big celebration party.

This was a nice clean break for us. Having suffered so many casualties, I highly doubted that the Holy Kingdom would be picking any fights with us anytime soon...which also meant we could move on to addressing our next set of problems now that we had taken back the capital.

That would be more than enough of a headache on its own, but as the victors, we had work to do.

"All right, everyone. So, uh, we beat their army. Can we get some applause?"

The three slime girls were happy to oblige.

"Yaaay!"

"Right, right."

“Yup!”

Now that we’d returned from the battlefield, we were holding a bit of a victory party for ourselves. The soldiers were being treated to a bountiful feast while the rest of us were having fun elsewhere. I felt bad for the men who were stuck watching the Holy Kingdom’s soldiers and the ones on patrol in Merinesburg’s, but someone had to do it. They were set to receive temporary bonuses later, so I hoped they’d be satisfied with that.

Ifriita was side-eyeing me and the slime girls from a little ways away. “Is this for real? You guys left this morning, got back by nightfall, and now you’re telling me you won? This is so ridiculous.”

“It is all, as you say, for real,” Sir Leonard replied. “Kousuke’s followers massacred at least half of the subjugation force in about an hour. In fact, there was no need for me to even draw my blade. All I did was watch over the battlefield alongside Sir Deckard.”

“...This sounds like made up nonsense.”

He shrugged. “I fully understand your disbelief, Princess Ifriita, but it is the truth.”

They were making it sound like this was all my work, but I barely did anything at all. Sure, I did some driving and worked as a mobile resupply station, but I never even picked up an actual weapon. The real heroes were the harpy bomb squad and the rifle squad. The latter in particular was probably in need of some serious mental care. I made a note to go discuss this with Madame Zamil later, though I could also talk to Sir Leonard.

After we’d defeated the Holy Kingdom’s forces, we discussed things with the handsome blond Holy Knight and the older gentleman from the Order of Mages, then left half of the harpies and rifle squad behind to keep watch before returning to Merinesburg.

The remnants of the Holy Kingdom’s forces were likely busy healing the wounded and cleaning up the battlefield right about now. Come nightfall, monsters would be drawn in by the scent of blood, so they’d need to put their all into collecting corpses and the keepsakes left by the fallen.

Starting tomorrow, we'd have to meet them face-to-face to discuss what we were going to do regarding any deserters, plus the supplies we were asking for as reparations. Given how low their morale must've been, there were likely quite a few deserters at this point. Folks like that who fled the battlefield with their equipment tended to become bandits, and that was always a headache.

As for supplies, their massive army of 60,000 had essentially been reduced by half, and since they were anticipating a drawn-out siege on Merinesburg, their provisions were plentiful. If nothing else, the silver lining here was that a lack of supplies wouldn't serve as an extra cause for desertion. I was certain they would prefer to be properly fed in a decent environment before being sent home, especially if they didn't intend to keep fighting.

On my end, Ifriita had been asking Sir Leonard about the details of today's battle, but meanwhile, Sylphy was discussing the future with Doriada, Aqual, and Serafeeta.

"What do you think they'll do, moving forward?"

"They'll either try diplomacy or sending more forces our way... Regardless, now that they've suffered such a crushing defeat, I believe it most likely that they will behave for the time being."

"Yes... If there is anything I can do to help, Sylphy, please let me know."

"Thank you, Dori."

Elsewhere, Ira, Archbishop Deckard, High Priestess Katalina, and Elen were talking about me.

"Was it really that incredible?"

"Indeed. It was an amazing sight. As embarrassing as it is to admit, it was enough to make my legs tremble."

"Kousuke's weapons are incredibly powerful," Ira said, "but while he enjoys making them, he doesn't like using them to hurt others. He looks like he's having the most fun when he's cultivating fields, making clothes and food... Things that can help people."

She was right: I definitely enjoyed making things more than killing people, but

I didn't hate crafting weapons. I mostly just enjoyed doing prep work, weapons included. I liked being ready for any and all situations.

"Kousuke."

"Hrm?"

I turned to find Grande standing next to me. Currently, I was entangled with Lime and being forced to sit on her like a chair, robbed of all of my dignity. Supporting my head was a very comfy cushion that absolutely was not a pair of breasts. Got it?

"What's up?" I asked Grande.

"Hm..."

I wasn't particularly sure what was going on, but for some reason, Grande climbed atop me (and, consequently, atop Lime), then proceeded to hold my head to her relatively flat chest and caress me with her large claws. Was this some kind of new form of scalp massage?

"Seriously, what's up?"

"Mother always told me that it is the duty of a good woman to comfort a man upon his return from the battlefield," Grande told me.

"I see... But I'm totally fine, you know?"

"Are you?"

"I am."

"Hrm..."

But Grande showed no signs of stopping her special massage. It kind of hurt, but it was pretty rare for her to dote on me like this, so I decided to allow it.

Haaah.

Something about this was oddly relaxing even though it kind of hurt. It was important to say that part twice.

And so I spent the duration of this little party being tended to by Grande and the three slime girls.



Chapter 1:

Reality is More Bitter Than a Fairy Tale

THE EVIL ENEMY ARMY was defeated, bringing peace to the land!

Sadly, reality didn't work that way. That kind of thing only happened in children's stories. The painful reality was that the post-battle cleanup was multiple times more laborious than the battle itself.

"But I suppose I shouldn't be complaining," I said. It was the night after we defeated the Holy Kingdom's subjugation force, and I was relaxing after a nice bath, gazing up at the ceiling. "We did win, after all, and we had zero casualties. Hell, no one was injured at all. As far as cleanup goes, this is on the easy end of things."

"In terms of our war with the Holy Kingdom, certainly," said Sylphy. "But what's more important right now is maintaining order."

"Yeah, you're right..."

The Liberation Army had stretched themselves pretty far in order to strike at the enemy before they could take Merinesburg. We took down all of the towns and Holy Kingdom strongholds between Arichburg and Merinesburg, then made quick work of the latter before they even had the chance to prepare for us.

Which also meant that our supply line was a long one...

"I guess our supply line knows no bounds, huh?" I mused.

"We have you, after all."

"You're a mobile supply base," Ira agreed, holding some fruit milk that I'd pulled out after our bath. "Plus, you have the power to produce supply bases that work independently, all in a short span of time. You're basically cheating, to be honest. Isn't that what they say in your world?"

"Well, you're not wrong."

In a single day, I could cultivate a huge field. In three days, I could harvest its

bounty. How could we possibly be concerned about provisions, y'know? And even if I didn't do anything but cultivate the field, others would be able to harvest crops from it after just a week or two.

As long as I had the right materials, I could mass-produce weapons, armor, and residencies. And funding was no problem either: All I needed to do was go and dig up some rocks to get tons of gems, ore, and mithril.

I could solve an entire military's food and equipment issues all on my own, and I could even build as many facilities as necessary that could solve said issues even if I wasn't present. I really was cheating, all things considered. In a simulation game, I was the kind of overpowered unit that would produce food, materials, money, and even increase the production effectiveness of your base. And to make matters worse (better), I could completely ignore the current level of military tech that existed *and* create a brand-new super powerful branch of the army.

"Man, I really am OP, aren't I?"

I was a powerful, reliable force that put my allies and friends at ease, but to my enemies, I was a real pain in the ass, huh? If I were them, I'd either try to kidnap me or kill me as soon as possible.

"Try not to leave the castle unless you really have to," Sylphy told me. "And if you do, make sure either I, Grande, or Melty is with you. Zamil and Ira won't be enough."

"Grr..." Ira grumbled unhappily but didn't say anything else.

She was a powerful mage, certainly, but her physical abilities were nothing to write home about. Although she could take down most enemies with her magic were they to approach her directly, she was weak against surprise attacks.

On the other hand, while Grande was small in stature, she had the strength and toughness of a grand dragon—not to mention she could fly. Melty was an overlord—a mutation—which meant she had the power and speed to take down even Grande.

Sylphy was a type of elf that specialized in combat. Apparently, she was capable of even fighting on par with Melty. I'd basically never seen her fight,

though, so this was all just info I'd heard from other people.

What about inside of the castle? Well, the three slime girls were here, and they had specs on par with Melty's. Their mission was to protect me, Sylphy, and Sylphy's entire family. Due to their contracts, they couldn't leave the castle, but on the flip side, that meant it was completely safe here.

Physical attacks did nothing to them, and they could regenerate even if they were blown away by magic. They had the strength to easily destroy boulders and had magic abilities that allowed them to withstand chorus magic. All of this combined made them near invincible within the confines of the castle.

As I was thinking about them, the three slime girls appeared out of the cracks in the corner of the room, ceiling, and shelves.

"Leeeeave security here, to us, 'kaaay?"

"As long as you stay here, you will be safe."

"It is impossible for you to do anything without us seeing it."

The girls had a plethora of talents that made them a huge pain in the ass to evildoers seeking to infiltrate the castle, but this was probably the hardest one to deal with. They were capable of placing replicas in locations all throughout the building, allowing them to keep an eye on everyone and everywhere. They were basically a biological security system.

Pirna returned with the other harpies in tow.

"We're baaack. Oh, you already took a bath?"

"How unfortunate."

"Well, whatevs. We should take a bath first, so we don't get him all dirty."

"Yup."

They'd been working nonstop this entire time, fighting off countless soldiers during the big battle, so they were granted a three-day break in shifts starting today.

The one leading the charge with this current group of harpies was the blue-feathered Pirna. With her were Pessa and Capri, who both had brown feathers,

as well as the black-feathered Rei.

The other harpies soon arrived after them. The one thing I could do, I thought, was help them relax as much as possible after they'd worked themselves to dust. I wanted to do anything I could for them over the next three days. Since they'd been busily flying around as of late, I'd barely had any time to spend with them.

"I'm gonna go take another bath," I announced.

"Make sure not to stay in too long," Sylphy said.

"Too much time in there can be bad for you," Ira chimed in.

"No worries, I'll be careful."

I waved to them, then made my way toward the bath, where I got in with the rest of the harpies. I got to enjoy their slim backs, the wonderful curves of their bodies, and the delightful sensation of their moist feathers. It was...wonderful.

Melty ended up joining the returning harpies, and eventually I stayed in the bath for too long, got dizzy, and collapsed.

I was out till morning...

"I guess I should start by repairing the machine guns and replenishing the ammo we used up."

I inserted orders into the golem workbench and the smithing station from within the small work cabin I built in a corner of the courtyard.

The rifle squad was immensely powerful when equipped with airboards and machine guns, but they were far from invincible. There was a limit to how much ammunition they could carry with them, and their equipment required maintenance and ammo refills after battle. They consumed such an immense amount of ammo in a single battle that three days of fighting would use up everything I could provide them with.

The size of this last subjugation force was such that we'd have been able to take them down no matter how well they were organized, but if our enemy came at us with supply lines more efficient than ours, well...I shuddered to

imagine.

“If it ever came to that, I’d have to go big or go home...”

I checked the condition of the gleaming, parachute-equipped magic jewel bomb in my inventory and let out a deep sigh.

Fortunately for all parties involved, I didn’t have to use it this time around, but who could say what the future might bring? According to Ira, this bomb had enough power to obliterate Arichburg in its entirety. It didn’t matter how many tens of thousands of men our enemy had—they’d all be dead in one blast.

“But I really don’t wanna have to resort to this...”

I could take out any army with one of these, killing tens of thousands of men with no survivors. Any witnesses would be dead, so nobody would be able to come up with an effective strategy against it... But using this bomb required an incredible level of resolve.

“Resort to what, exactly?”

“Gah!”

A voice came from behind me, making me inadvertently scream. When I turned around, I saw Elen standing there. Today, she was clad in her splendid priestess garb, making her look every bit the saint she was. Her attire also packed high defense.

“Wh-why are you so surprised to see me?” she asked.

“Oh, no, it’s not that. I just wasn’t really paying attention is all, so you caught me off guard. Finished with your duties for the morning?”

“Yes, I just wrapped up.” Elen stared directly into my eyes. “So, what exactly is it you do not want to resort to?”

According to Ira, Elen possessed a type of arcane eyes that allowed her to see through lies. In fact, it was that skill that made her a revered figure within the Holy Kingdom: the Saint of Truth. She’d also attracted the ire of some no-good priests and nobility after exposing them for their dealings.

In other words, there was no point trying to fool her with some made-up BS.

“I was just thinking that I’m glad I didn’t need to resort to using my trump card,” I admitted. I pulled out a heavy barrel light machine gun from my inventory. “We managed to defeat our enemy with this kind of machine gun, but I actually have a weapon even more powerful than that. One that could annihilate an army in one fell swoop.”

Normally, the whole weapon would weigh over eleven kilograms, but because the barrel and machine parts were made of black steel, a metal unique to this world, it weighed forty percent more, making it over fifteen kilograms. When you attached a fifty round ammo magazine to this thing, it got even heavier.

“May I try and hold it?” Elen asked.

“Sure, but it’s heavy.”

“Just for a moment.”

“Be careful,” I said, handing her the large weapon.

Either thanks to my level or the achievement I got from hitting Level 20, I was now able to handle a weapon this large with little effort, but Elen was a different story—she had such a slender figure.

“Hrm... It is quite heavy.” Elen grimaced, just barely managing to hold up the light machine gun. There was something incredibly impactful about a saint such as her wielding a weapon like that. “So the soldiers of your Liberation Army swing weapons like this around?”

Actually, the combo of sister and pistol or submachine gun might be pretty sweet.

“Well, not exactly,” I said. “You don’t bludgeon people with it. The recoil control on it works as intended, so the troops have no problems wielding it.”

“That is incredible. It would be rather difficult for me to walk around with such a weapon.”

“I bet.”

I took the gun out of Elen’s hands and packed it back into my inventory. That gun was one I kept in storage, since it was an untested, brand-new model.

Whether I actually ended up using it or not, it was the curse of being a

survival gamer to want to always keep a weapon on hand.

“So what is this trump card you spoke of earlier?”

“A dangerous weapon capable of slaughtering tens of thousands of soldiers in one blow. The details are classified.”

“Classified, you say?”



“Yup. You’re better off knowing nothing about it. Only a handful of people in the Liberation Army even know it exists. After all, it’s not something I want to use if at all possible.”

Elen tilted her head. “With something that powerful, would you not be able to bring the Holy Kingdom to its knees?”

“If our end goal was to annihilate the Holy Kingdom, sure,” I said. “But neither me nor Sylphy want that.”

“Is that so...? I would have thought otherwise, given the resentment that has built up over the years.”

“It’s impractical to just give yourself over to rage and eliminate an entire group of people off the face of the planet, and the Holy Kingdom is too big for that to begin with. Sylphy’s anger runs deep, sure, but she isn’t foolish enough to turn her eyes away from reality.”

“Then the citizens of the Holy Kingdom are deeply fortunate.”

“Honestly, the way you’re talking, you sound like you’ve got way more resentment for the Holy Kingdom than any of us do,” I remarked.

Elen turned her gaze back at me and blinked several times. I guess my words were right on the mark.

“Well, you are not wrong,” she said. “I hate the Holy Kingdom. Enough to want it wiped off the continent, perhaps.”

“That’s uncharacteristically brutal of you.”

“You would feel the same way if you saw firsthand what it is like there,” she said with a sigh, dropping her gaze down to the floor.

As a saint, Elen was up close and personal with the internal goings-on of Adolism and the Holy Kingdom. If she was saying this, then perhaps the center pillar of the Holy Kingdom was more rotten than even I imagined.

“Well, either way, we won’t be actively trying to destroy the Holy Kingdom,” I said, “so just keep that in mind. Though we’re also not going to sit quietly if they pick a fight with us.”

“How unfortunate. I would have loved to see that shithead pope and shithead holy king cry and beg for mercy.”

“Little Miss Saint? Your dark side is showing.”

“Ah, my word. Hee, hee.”

Elen put on her best saintly smile, hiding away the dark aura that was leaking out of her. If her malice ran this deep, what exactly did the pope and the holy king do to her? I wanted to ask, but quite frankly, I was scared to. I'd have to find some time to talk to Archbishop Deckard later.

“Any plans for today?” she asked me.

“Hrm, well, nothing until the afternoon. If Melty or Sylphy throw some work my way, I'll probably focus on that.”

For now, we had complete control over Merinesburg, and Melty, Ira, and Sir Leonard were handling negotiations with the remnants of the Holy Kingdom's forces that were cleaning up the battlefield. There probably wasn't anything I needed to see to in a hurry. The harpies said they'd be sleeping through the afternoon, so I was free.

“In that case, I would like you to keep me company this morning,” Elen declared. “You are lacking in many ways.”

“Hey, what's that supposed to mean?” I sputtered. “Is it just me, or are you being super rude?”

“You will understand soon enough. Now, come with me.”

Elen circled around me and began to push my back. I wasn't entirely sure what was going on, but apparently, I was going to be spending the morning with the saint.

So where had Elen taken me, exactly?

It appeared to be a wardrobe room of sorts, except there were none of the dresses or ceremonial clothes you'd expect. That said, what was here was equally as glamorous.

“No matter what you wear, you lack majesty or even a spec of holiness,” Elen sighed.

I was currently clad in what one could call clergyman’s attire. Elen’s attendant sisters, Amalie and Belta, were dressing me on her orders. Unfortunately, she didn’t seem particularly impressed by any of the outfits.

“Look, no matter what you make me wear, I can’t just become something I’m not,” I protested.

“Can you not try and at least make a more gallant expression? Like this, see?” Elen made a saintly face, which I tried to imitate, but...

“Pfft! Hee, hee... P-please do not make me laugh.”

“How rude.”

She was actually laughing at me.

Amalie, Belta, don’t feel like you need to hold back. Come on, laugh. I know you want to.

“Ngh, hee, hee, hee... I-I am so sorry.”

“I s-swear, I am not trying to... Pfft.”

I shot a glare at the two women. “Hey, look. I’m glad I’m so entertaining. Seriously.”

“Well, this certainly is a problem. I knew from the outset that it would be difficult for you to stand side by side with me, but I did not think your sense of regality would be so utterly lacking... At this point, our best option might be to have you wear pure white armor and a helmet.”

“My personal regality or lack thereof won’t even matter, then. It’ll all just be the armor and how intimidating it looks.”

“That is true, and thus would be taking a step back from the intended goal. Let us give up on the impossible. Though, I did have fun dressing you up.”

A wave of exhaustion came flooding over me. “I knew I was just being played with...”

Both Amalie and Belta were in the prime of their youth. I didn’t know their

exact ages, but at a glance, they both looked to be in their early twenties. Being dressed and undressed by women that age was mentally exhausting for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was when certain body parts made contact with one another.

“How are you feeling, Amalie?” Elen asked her attendant.

“Well, just like I imagined, Sir Kousuke isn’t very scary at all.”

“Is that so? In that case, we will proceed as discussed.”

I could feel my sixth sense tingling. It was telling me that it would be a mistake to ignore their conversation, but also that it would be dangerous to blindly butt in as well. What was the right move here? And why did it feel like I was already too late...?

No, Kousuke. You can’t give up! You mustn’t!

“Um, what exactly are you two talking about...?”

“Since I was little, I was raised in a monastery surrounded by only women,” Amalie explained. “As embarrassing as it is to admit, I am rather frightened of men.”

“And as it so happens, she does not have that same fear of you, Sir Kousuke,” Belta added calmly. “Perhaps because she treated you when you succumbed to poison before.”

Huh... She treated me, eh? Sure, yeah, that’s what happened. I could barely move at the time, and my internal organs had been eviscerated by poison, causing all kinds of nastiness to leak out of me, and she treated me. Yup. Which meant there wasn’t a single part of my body that these three women hadn’t seen.

“Oh, what’s this? You are turning bright red. Were you perhaps remembering how the three of us took care of you? Were you getting aroused? What a lewd man you are.”

“That’s not it! I’m embarrassed, that’s all!”

Amalie and Belta both began to giggle as they watched me freak out.

No, wait. I can’t get distracted! This conversation isn’t over.

“Kousuke.” Elen beat me to the punch, making me shrink back before I could say anything else.

“Nrgh... What is it?”

There was something about every word she spoke that had an incredible weight to it. Whenever she said my name, I couldn’t help but retreat into a listening position. Was this that regality she was talking about earlier?

“The Lord has spoken,” she said solemnly. “Be fruitful and multiply.”

“Y-yeah, right.”

I’ve heard that passage before somewhere! Aw, darn! I’ve got a bad feeling about this!

“You are a disciple of God. Together, we must become the leaders of this new Adolism within Merinard.”

“I-I see?”

“And so while I know this will be a bit uncomfortable for you, I need you to physically personify the doctrines described in our scriptures.”

“This is starting to sound real sketchy.”

“Hence the passage I quoted earlier. The non-modified scriptures spoke of harmony between demi-humans and humans. As such, it is wonderful how well you, a disciple, have gotten along with the demi-humans, but it would also be terribly unfair if you did not do the same with us as well.”

She was ignoring me completely at this point. Also, I was beginning to get the full picture.

Run, Kousuke!

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

I felt the hem of my shirt being grabbed from both the left and right; Amalie and Belta were shooting me passionate gazes.

No, no, no, no! Hold your horses! I’m already way overbooked! There’s no way I can handle anyone else. There’s a limit to how much space my heart has!

This world had no super convenient contraceptives. In other words, if you did the horizontal tussle, you'd probably end up with a bun in the oven. It was difficult for kids to be conceived between humans and demi-humans, but two standard humans could make a kid no problem. Actually, though, since I was technically from another world, I didn't really know if I could have kids or not, but I digress.

"Stop right there!"

SMASH!

Someone slammed open the door with perfect timing, almost as if it had been planned entirely. I decided to ignore that feeling.

"Chaaarge!"

"Tweet, tweet!"

A number of individuals came rushing into the room, tweeting as colorful feathers flew everywhere.

Ah, this delightfully soft sensation tells me that the harpies have arrived. It feels so incredible... Actually, even Elen, Amalie, and Berta are submerged in feathers now. Hope they're okay. I'm pretty sure I heard someone go "Waaah!" and "Eeek!" but who can say for sure?

"Target acquired!"

"Retreat!"

"Tweet, tweet!"

Amid the chaos, a number of harpies picked me up like I was some kind of portable Shinto shrine, then carried me out of the room.

I don't even care what happens anymore, as long as they get me out of here!

The harpies ended up noisily hauling me over to their barracks in the corner of the castle. Sylphy had given them this space seeing as they naturally lived as a group. Needless to say, I helped with getting it all together.

"Here you go, Kousuke. Say, 'Aaah.'"

“Aaah.”

“Mm, hee, hee.”

“Who’s a good boy? You’re a good boy.”

As for my current situation? Well, I was being doted on like the king of a harem. They sat me down on a large, comfy cushion, then surrounded me, feeding me fruits and offering me something delicious to drink.

Additionally, I was being treated to beautiful dances by harpies clad in revealing outfits. The way their colorful feathers spun about as they danced was truly something to behold.

“You really saved my butt just now.”

“Think nothing of it. We are always on your side, Kousuke. That said, Her Majesty wants us to be on good terms with them, so we won’t be able to come to your aid every single time.”

“Sylphy’s been plotting, huh?”

“Yes.”

I closed my eyes and tilted my head upward toward the ceiling.

Curse you, Sylphy!!!

“It seems only fair, considering the relationships we’ve forged with Kousuke.”

I could picture her smiling painfully in my mind’s eye. She wasn’t wrong either. But still.

This was obviously a decision made in the name of politicking. Moving forward, it was clear that the stronger my relationship and connection to Adolism was, the better. As Sylphy’s partner, this was how I could help keep the believers in line in the long run.

Sylphy and Ira had long life spans even among other demi-humans, and Melty was similar in that respect, thanks to being an overlord. Grande was obviously in the same position. Given their long lives, there was no reason to rush into having kids with them.

But that wasn’t the case for Elen. She was just a regular human with a regular

life span, so the time she had to give birth to a child and raise them was comparatively much shorter. And then the actual process of giving birth was dangerous in and of itself. This world had healing magic and all kinds of alchemical potions, and in some cases it even surpassed the medical care available in my world, sure. But even then, it was still dangerous—potentially even fatal.

There was also no guarantee that Elen and I could have a child, and if she did, there was no guarantee that they'd grow up to be healthy. In that regard, it was risky for me to take Elen on as my single human partner. I wouldn't have been surprised if Elen, Archbishop Deckard, and even High Priestess Katalina all felt the same way.

And as much as it pained me to consider because it felt gross, this new Adolism within Merinard required a figurehead. A symbol of sorts. For example, the child born between God's disciple and the saint of Adolism.

In the early days, Elen and I could serve that function as the saint and disciple respectively, but dozens, even hundreds of years from now, my descendants would play that role. It was best for there to be lots of blessed children born between God's disciple and other pious Adolism believers. Or at least that's what everyone was probably thinking.

Fortunately, Elen, Amalie, and Belta all seemed to be fairly on board with the idea.

"Personally, I think this is all overly complicated. Shouldn't it just be fine if they love you? Humans sure are a pain."

"Riiight? It's cruel to make you have to worry about all of this."

"Remember, ya don't gotta worry 'bout none of that tough stuff when you're with us! You can just turn your brain off and have fun."

The harpies' limitless doting aura infiltrated my brain, reducing me to comfy mush. *Aaah, I can't even think anymore...*

"By the way, what's with all of this?" I asked. "It's sorta like a ceremony."

"Hrm? Oh, this is a ritual to officially accept you as our husband."

“Huh, officially... Officially?”

“Yup! Officially.”

Were they saying it wasn't official up until now...? We'd gotten busy a whole bunch already; were we going to be going even harder? Wh-whoa...

“No need to be afraid! All ya gotta do is let us dote on ya! 'Kay?”

I felt the tips of someone's feathers gently caress my chest.

“Her Majesty promised to build us our own special barracks later, so we were all talking about how it might be time to finally start a new family.”

“A family?”

“Uh-huh. Y'know how we're all originally from different families and stuff, right? And how we all became one flock centered 'round you, yeah? Well, none of us really know what's going on with our old families, and it's not like we can each take a part of you with us, so we decided to make our own flock together.”

“The bit about taking a part of me with you is kind of terrifying, so I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that. Anyway, what do I need to do?”

“All ya have to do is spend time with us like ya always have!”

“And we'll take good care of you.”

“All right, got it.”

There was no way I could run from this, nor did I want to. In other words, my best choice here was to stop thinking and give myself over to their soft feathers.

Yeah...

Thanks to the harpies and their persistent doting, I managed to stop thinking so hard about the Amalie and Belta situation. At the end of the day, virtue, the way marriages were perceived, and the way male and female relationships were understood were all just completely different in this world.

And, not to be crass, but I had relationships with a ton of harpies, and Sylphy, and a bunch of other women, so who was I to complain about an additional two

or three? There were so many harpies that I couldn't count them on both hands, so honestly, it was way too late to be complaining about any of this.

"Kousuke, you are a Fabled Visitor," Sir Leonard told me. "That means you are quite literally the only person of your bloodline in this world. To that end, I personally believe that you should leave behind as many descendants as possible. Do not overthink this."

"Is that really okay...?"

How can I not overthink this?! That's asking the impossible! Save me, lionman!

I'd approached him after dinner to discuss things, but I didn't get the answer I was looking for. If anything, he endorsed the idea of me getting together with as many women as possible.

That's not the answer I wanted to hear!

Sir Leonard shrugged, his cup filled with mead. "It is, in fact, okay. If you continue on your current course... Actually, you will most assuredly become the prince consort of the new Kingdom of Merinard. That means you should have as many children as you see fit."

The small table we were sitting at was laden with mead and finely cut dried meats. They were the somewhat expensive kind that valued flavor over preservability.

"Isn't that going to cause problems concerning the line of succession...?" I imagined a group of siblings waging a bloody war against each other for the crown. I didn't want to see my own children participate in something so awful.

"You will only be the prince consort. You do not have the blood of the Merinard royal family flowing through your veins, so no matter how many children you father, the only ones that will have the right to succession are those birthed by Princess Sylphyel. You have nothing to fear. However..."

"However...?"

"It will present a major problem if the two of you fail to have a child. It is easier for a human and an elf to have a child compared to the other races, but elves in general do not conceive easily."

“Are you telling me I need to work harder?”

“That is certainly part of it...but in addition, Princess Sylphyel is not the only person who carries the blood of the former royal family.”

“...Hey. Wait a second.” Was he telling me to have kids with her sisters?

“It is as you suspect. I believe eventually this will come to pass, so you had best prepare yourself now.”

“Whoa, hold on! That’s just going to create succession problems, like we talked about earlier!”

“The other princesses have said that they do not wish to have any succession rights in the new Kingdom of Merinard. However, at the end of the day, they possess the same blood as Princess Sylphyel. In the event that you and Her Majesty fail to have a child, you will have the option to adopt a child you conceived with one of the other princesses. It would be best to have multiple options, especially considering the very existence of Merinard will be on the line.”

“I-I mean, but... Wait a second. I object to the notion that elves don’t get pregnant easily. Serafeeta had four girls.”

“That is true,” he conceded. “Perhaps Lady Serafeeta is simply blessed with a fertile body. However, that does not change the fact that generally speaking, elves struggle to get pregnant. Since Princess Sylphyel is her daughter, perhaps she too might possess the same qualities... However, given recent history, I think it is fair to conclude that that is not the case.”

“Urgh...” I had no way of firing back. It was a fact that Sylphy and I hadn’t conceived a child yet. We weren’t using any sort of contraception, so if she had the same constitution as her mother, she should have been pregnant already. “...Say it ain’t so, Bernie.”

“My name is Leonard. And Kousuke, what did you do to Lady Serafeeta?”

“Huh? Er, nothing.” I found myself caught off guard by the sudden mention of Serafeeta. I hadn’t done anything. Nothing at all. I just comforted her a little is all.

“I have a pretty good eye for things, I’ll have you know. And I can tell she has the look of a woman who is drawn to a man.”

“Oh, shit.”

I had the feeling that was the case, but... No. I’m just being excessively self-conscious is all! Sir Leonard has no clue what he’s talking about! There’s no way that’s true. Definitely not.

Definitely.

“Though I suppose this is far more desirable than when she looked to be on the verge of taking her own life,” Sir Leonard mused. “First it was Her Majesty, then the saint, and now even Lady Serafeeta. Kousuke, are you giving off some sort of scent that draws high-class women to you? The other princesses seem attracted to you as well.”

“I’m not giving off sketchy pheromones, if that’s what you’re implying.” Though I had no clue why spirits, Lime and the others—and even faeries—were so fond of me.

I mean, I’m not giving off sketchy pheromones, right? ...Right?!

I opened my menu and started poring over my achievements.

Technician: Satisfied your partner during copulation. Aren’t you good in bed?
*Attacks against the opposite sex are increased by 10%.

Lady Killer: Become loved by over 20 members of the opposite sex. Nice boat, baby. *Attacks against the opposite sex are increased by 10%.

Hero: Kill 3,000 humanoids on your own. At this point, you’re more than just a killer, eh? *Allies within 100 meters of your position get an overall 10% power boost. Affinity level more easily increased.

Ladies’ Man: Perform intercourse with over twenty individuals of the opposite sex. Pretty soon, someone’s going to tell you, “How about you just drop dead!”
*Raises your attack power against individuals of the opposite sex by 20%.

Dragon Slayer: Kill three dragons by yourself or make them submit. *Raises your attack power against dragons by 15%.

Creator of Death: Have 10,000 or more individuals murdered by weapons you created. Welcome, stranger...! *Raises the abilities of the weapons you craft by 10%.

Royal Killer: Draw the affections of three or more women of high birth. J-just kill me and be done with it! *Raises your attack power against high birth individuals of the opposite sex by 30%.

Madame Killer: Draw the affections of five women twenty-plus years older than yourself. You're such a naughty boy! *Raises your attack power against women twenty-plus years older than you.

I didn't recognize some of these achievements, but if the "attack power" they all referenced was meant in a romantic fashion, then didn't this mean my effectiveness against Serafeeta was at, like, 100 percent or something?

The Hero achievement didn't specify how much easier it was to raise affection, which meant that it might have multiplied my stats instead. In fact, it was possible that they all worked that way. All of these abilities were playing loosey goosey with their wording.

I decided to ignore the comments attached to them all. That was for the best.

In any case, if these achievements were all operating the way I suspected they were, then it meant that I could make a woman fall for me just by being a little kind or chatting with them, regardless of what my intentions were...

Someone get me the admin! This is a huge bug! If I unlock any other achievements like this, there'll be no turning back!

"Okay, maybe you're right about the pheromone thing."

"I sincerely hope that scent of yours does not rub off on me," Sir Leonard said, standing up and putting some distance between us.

"It's not actually a scent!" I protested. "I swear! Don't make it sound like I smell bad! You're gonna hurt my feelings!"

"Bah ha ha ha, I was merely joking! Though things will be quite exhausting for you moving forward. Try to hang in there. At this point, there is no avoiding a

life as a studhorse, Kousuke.”

“I really didn’t want to hear that...”

“You might as well enjoy yourself. You will be surrounded by beautiful women, what is there not to like? Consider how less popular men might feel if they heard you. They might even try to take your life.”

“Hah hah hah... Good luck to you too, Sir Leonard.”

I know all about your situation. The squad due to arrive soon is full of widows who are head over heels for you. You can act like romance isn’t your problem, but it won’t stay that way for long!

“I-I’m protecting the honor of my late wife,” he insisted.

“Face the facts, pal. You’re a nobleman with territory to your name. Not producing an heir just ain’t gonna happen. Good luck!”

“B-but I...”

“Good luck, my good fellow! I’ve got your back! Hell, I’ll even give you some medicine to help you out!”

You’re not getting away from me!

Chapter 2:

Nevertheless, Reality Refuses to Wait

“SO, WHAT’S THIS ALL ABOUT?”

Melty offered me a pained smile. “Hrm, well... Probably something like self-hatred? Or maybe she’s just sulking. The poor woman has nowhere to place her emotions right now.”

I’d pushed a whole bunch of quality aphrodisiacs onto Sir Leonard, then went back to Sylphy in my room...only to find her digging her head into a mountain of pillows, her ass up in the air. She’d even managed to fall asleep like that or something—she wasn’t moving at all.

“Does this have something to do with me?”

I had a really good hunch as to why she was acting like this: There was the whole Elen thing, and also the stuff with her sisters. If Sir Leonard was saying that stuff to me, then it was far too likely that all this had been discussed even before it reached my ears. Everything probably started from Doriada.

“There is no point in hiding things any further, so I’ll just give you the truth,” said Melty. “You are right. In the end, Sylphy is... We’re all pushing things onto you.”

“Things never quite work out the way you want them to,” I sighed.



“Indeed. But it is what it is, and you’ll have to deal with that. Good luck.”

“Haaah... I suppose I should start with digging out our princess here.”

“Allow me to help.”

And so the two of us dug the sulking future Queen of Merinard out from the mountain of pillows. She kept on stubbornly smooshing her face into one of the pillows without letting go, but whatever. We ended up carrying Sylphy to bed, then lying on both sides of her as she curled up into a ball and slept.

I gazed at her, face down in her pillow. “Man, I wish she’d lean on me a bit more, especially when she’s feeling down in the dumps like this,” I said with a pained smile.

“She’s in a rough spot,” said Melty. “It all makes sense given both of your positions, but it can’t be easy sending you off to other women.”

“Mm, yeah, I bet... If I were in her position, I don’t know if I’d be able to stand it all.” Just thinking about it was enough to nearly destroy me. It was incredible that Sylphy was holding up as well as she was, quite frankly.

“I know it’s supposed to be a show of honor for a man to wed many women, but for the wife, it’s a real struggle. Less time to spend with the man you love.”

“...And you’re one of the women I’m making feel bad...”

“I’m fine,” Melty insisted. “My little sister’s stuff is my stuff, even if we’re not really related.”

“Who are you, Jaian?”

Their relationship really was something of a mystery to me. They were technically in a lord-and-retainer sort of situation, but in private, Melty behaved a lot like Sylphy’s older sister. Given how long they’d probably been together, I’m sure they’d been through a lot.

“Anyway, today I’ll be playing with you, since Sylphy’s too busy sulking.”

“Why does it sound like I’m just a toy...?” I smirked painfully and shot a look at Melty where she was lying on the other side of Sylphy...but she wasn’t there anymore.

Before I could even blink, I felt a tiny gust of wind blow past me, then quickly realized that Melty was embracing me from behind.

What happened...? Man, she uses her insane physical abilities for the most pointless stuff.

“Hrm, but you know, I wouldn’t mind if you made me your plaything every now and then,” she hummed. “It is so very mysterious how at ease I feel when I’m close to you like this. I wonder why that is?”

“Beats me... Anyway, you wanna be my plaything? What does that even mean?”

I could never match her physically, so I always ended up in a passive position.

“How about this? Today, we’ll go at your pace, and you can do whatever you want to me. Now come here,” Melty said before moving away from my back and pulling at my shirt with her fingertips.

Come here? And then what? I thought as I rolled toward Melty to face her.

“Weren’t we trying to make Sylphy feel better because she’s down in the dumps? Isn’t this kind of devious?”

“It’s her fault for being so wishy-washy and getting sad instead of just letting you dote on her. Now come here, Kousuke. Strip me down as you see fit and have a taste,” Melty said with an alluring smile as she exposed her chest.

Grrr...

No matter how hard I tried to resist, I couldn’t look away.

“Aren’t you going to touch me?” she pressed.

“I mean, shouldn’t we be focusing on Sylphy right now?”

“She’s acting like a toddler, so just leave her be. Now come and play with me. You can have your way.”

Melty was basically entirely exposed at this point, her melties laid bare.

Boing.

Her tender pair of hills jiggled freely. Although she was lying down on her back, they somehow maintained their form. What was this magic? Was this

what it meant to be an overlord?

“Come here, Kousuke. Here are your favorite breasts!”

“S-stop it! You know I can’t say no to that!”

With an aroused smile on her face, Melty shook her body, making the pink tips of her twin peaks jiggle at me.

Ah... They’re drawing me in... I can’t resist...

“...”

Incapable of resisting the gravitational pull of her giant mountains, I moved closer, only to feel something tug on my clothes.

I turned around and found Sylphy shooting me a resentful glare, her arm stretched out toward me and grabbing at my clothes. “...You traitor.”

“Stop taking it out on Kousuke,” Melty scolded her. “He tried to give you his time, and instead you closed yourself up.”

Before I could even realize it, Melty had gently but firmly grabbed my wrist. If she pulled me with such force, she would literally rip my arm off.

Please stop.

“If you like breasts so much, have your way with mine!” Sylphy scoffed. “Unlike Melty’s drooping tits, mine are still nice and firm.” She sat up energetically, and with one hand still gripping my clothes, she used her other to take her top off, freeing her chest.

Okay, yes, her breasts were incredible.

“How very rude. As you can see, my breasts aren’t droopy in the least! Right, Kousuke?”

Melty sat up as well, intentionally bouncing her breasts as much as she could. How could I possibly choose between the two of them? There was no inferiority or superiority when it came to breasts. Big, small... They were all deserving of respect. I wanted the two women here to understand that.

So please, calm down! I’m begging you! Gaaah!

Now that we'd beaten the Holy Kingdom's army back, it would take some time before they returned home and their government could react to what had transpired here. The Liberation Army had to use that time to lay the groundwork to get the new Kingdom of Merinard up and running. The problem was that taking over an entire nation—or I guess in this case, reclaiming a nation—was no easy task.

Huh? What happened with the boobey battle between Sylphy and Melty? Well, I've decided not to talk about that anymore. I just want you all to know that I nearly suffocated for the first time in ages. War... Nothing good can come out of war... But understand that it was awesome. I can say that much for certain.

Now, let's get back to business.

At present, the Holy Kingdom's army was in charge of maintaining public order within the borders, alongside a garrison of troops they'd put together from the people who lived here. According to what we heard, this garrison maintained the law and order in the towns and cities, and outside of those regions, on roads and the like, the Holy Kingdom's forces took care of things. Or at least that was the case for the majority of the situations we heard about.

In terms of governing and rule, if the lords and governors were humans and swore loyalty to the Holy Kingdom, vowing to become believers of Adolism, they were allowed to continue their rule. In cases where the lords and governors were demi-humans or humans who refused to pledge loyalty, their areas were razed to the ground and the rulers were replaced with high-ranking Adolist faithful.

The human nobles with massive amounts of territory typically pledged loyalty to the Holy Kingdom and were allowed to continue governing under the supervision of a high-ranking clergyman. Demi-human nobles either had their entire families wiped out, or they disappeared.

Our first order of business was to get in touch with the remaining local rulers and have them pledge allegiance to the new Kingdom of Merinard. We would also need to offer them an under-the-table payoff after careful consideration. In the worst-case scenario, we could just say "the biggest merit to submission is that we don't destroy you," but I wasn't sure what Sylphy was planning.

In order to be a fully formed nation, at the bare minimum you had to offer the citizens safety and guarantee they wouldn't go hungry. Regardless of the particulars, you couldn't just use violence to eliminate the current governing system then say, "Hey, all fixed now!" Or at least that's how I felt about things.

If you took the way this world worked into account, it was actually the case that those with power were able to rule over others. On a personal level, however, I wanted to take a more measured approach.

"Our most pressing business right now is tending to the golem communicator information network, the harpy security network, and our defense network composed of our highly mobile airboards, huh...?" Sylphy mused. "We need to recruit more troops who can maintain public order, and if bandits and monsters are running amok, we have to take care of them too. There is a ton of work to be done."

"We also need to reexamine the locations of fortresses and strongholds and consider repositioning them more efficiently," said Melty. She turned to Ira. "Have you finished development on the new wide-range golem communicator?"

"Mm. We're done developing communications equipment capable of processing multiple transmissions at once. If we combine that with the magic amplifiers that can broaden our communications range, we should be able to create a communications network that can cover a wide area... However, in order to mass-produce all of this in a short period of time, we'll need Kousuke's help. Making the cores takes time."

"We'll also need Kousuke's powers to relocate the fortresses and to increase our agricultural production," Melty said. "It would also be best to have his abilities on hand to increase the number of airboards and strengthen our border defenses."

"His help driving out the main faction of Adolism would also be appreciated," Elen chimed in. "It would be possible to get rid of them using my truth-seeing eyes, but it would be best to have a disciple of God present to convince the believers who are blind to the main sect's lies."

It sounded like my aid was needed across the land... *Hah hah hah. Sorry,*

everyone, but there's only one me!

“Can’t you make clones like the slime girls?”

“Are you kidding me?” I groaned. “No way. But I can make stuff as long as I have my workbench, so I can just handle that before bed, no matter where I am. As for fortress relocation and the Adolist faithful... I can destroy any preexisting strongholds, collect the materials, then hit any nearby towns and villages and convert the faithful.”

Realistically speaking, this was our only real option. Normally, it would be best to give the fortress rebuilding job to some citizens as public work, but that’d have to wait until we got the bare minimum infrastructure in place.

“In that case, I should accompany you on your journey,” Elen said nonchalantly. “If we are going to convert those faithful to the main sect, it would be wise to have both myself, the saint, and you, the disciple, together. I will also be able to tell if the local soldiers are trustworthy or not.”

There was no readable expression on Elen’s face, but Melty looked annoyed.

The others almost certainly wanted to come with me, but Sylphy was the next queen—she couldn’t just up and leave Merinesburg. Melty, who was effectively her chancellor, was in the same position. Ira was busy re-establishing the Merinard Order of Mages, developing new magic tools, and putting her all into normalizing alchemical potions and such. Like Sylphy, neither of these women could just take time off for a trip.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Deckard and High Priestess Katalina were here in Merinesburg, which meant that things on the Adolism side would be fine even if Elen accompanied me.

Just for the record, Archbishop Deckard was watching us discuss things from a little ways away while sipping tea. He looked like one of those older Japanese men relaxing in the outer hall of a Japanese house.

As for Sir Leonard, well, he left the city via airboard earlier this morning to meet up with the squad monitoring the retreating members of the Holy Kingdom’s army. It wouldn’t be long before Danan and his forces would arrive in Merinesburg, so Sir Leonard was placing him in charge. That lion bastard was

nothing if not quick on his feet.

“All right, then,” I said. “Elen and Madame Zamil will be coming with me, along with...let’s go with two platoons from the rifle squad and a few harpies.”

“That sounds about right. Grande might end up tagging along.”

“She can be pretty impulsive, so...even if she didn’t come with us, she could just fly to see me if the mood struck her.”

I’d be doing the driving, so I wouldn’t be able to give her much of my time, and she’d end up sleeping in the back of the airboard in all likelihood. It’d be easier for her to just eat and sleep in Merinesburg, then fly to see me whenever she wanted to. If I told her the route we were taking, she’d be able to find us no problem.

“Might I have a word?”

As we discussed among ourselves, Archbishop Deckard suddenly cut in. It would be tremendously foolish to ignore the opinion of an archbishop of the Holy Kingdom, especially one with plentiful experience under his belt. Sylphy nodded and encouraged him to speak.

“I believe it would be wise for a few of our clergymen to accompany you as well, not just Elen,” he said. “If the goal is to convert those who have been misguided, it would be best to have personnel appropriate for the job.”

“Hrm... That is true,” said Elen.

“Modifying the rear communications airboards to accommodate personnel transport wouldn’t take much on my end,” I said. “I could even keep the drivers the same.”

Airboards required experienced drivers. Since we had a few of those, it would be a waste not to use them in this scenario.

“These are all good points,” said Sylphy. “Having civil servants there to provide support would also be a boon... In which case, you will need quite a few people. Melty, how have the civil servant appointments been going?”

“Thanks to Lady Eleonora’s support, I have been able to recruit individuals who were civil servants in the old Kingdom of Merinard, guild members, and

merchants,” Melty replied. “For now, the base requirement is that they are proficient in reading and writing, as well as some level of arithmetic. As for those who were executives under the Holy Kingdom’s government, we’re currently in the middle of conducting investigations as to whether they should be allowed to continue in their positions.”

“Many of them were well-fed while working for the white pig, so I would prefer that they weren’t kept on board...” Elen shook her head irritably. “How wretched.”

Not all of the clergymen in the main faction were rotten to the core, but it wasn’t terribly surprising that awful people gathered under other awful people. Perhaps those who were decent at first ended up corrupted along the way.

“In any case, our number one priority is maintaining law and order here, so I want everyone to work toward that end,” Sylphy said. “Melty, Elen, I need the both of you to select individuals to accompany Kousuke. Kousuke, ready yourself for the journey and work on agrarian reform on the outskirts of Merinesburg. Ira, get the materials and resources you need to put together our communications and defense networks.”

“Kaaay.”

“Understood.”

“Roger that.”

“Mm, okay.”

Sylphy rose to her feet. “Then let’s get started. If anything comes up, be sure to report it.”

We all stood up and began handling what we needed to do. First, I needed to enter crafting requests for airboard and communication core parts, check with Melty about production plans, look into city planning and agrarian reform...

There was so much to do!

There’s so much to do. So much, and yet it’s all monotonous tasks.

For the various parts I needed to make, all I had to do was input the requests

into my workbench, and expanding farmland was something I'd done so many times that I was already bored of it.

As far as the town planning end of things went, my job largely consisted of deconstructing the overpopulated, illegally built housing complexes, then reorganizing them into well-organized housing complexes. Now, what this actually meant was...

"It's town planning time! Get yer butts moving, boys!"

A chorus of "Yes, sir!" answered my call.

"G-gaaah! Town planning is here! They're here!!!"

In this particular case, "town planning" referred to a rather inconvenient group of people that barged into your house, regardless of how dirty it was or what naughty things you were getting up to, then used human wave tactics to force you out, destroyed your house, and rebuilt it in one fell swoop.

According to the city's residents...

"The group is made up of a bunch of frightening demi-humans, so it's not like we can complain. But my house is so much nicer now, so I guess it's fine."

"It was my day off, so me and my partner were getting some private time in. Then all of a sudden, they barged into my house and tossed us out while we were buck naked. I was furious, obviously, but then for some reason, they gifted me a huge, brand-new bed."

"Those heinous bastards took all of my treasure. It was all garbage? Hmph, one man's garbage is another man's treasure."

"How could I not be grateful after they went and cleaned my neighbor's awful room? That place stunk, especially on nice days. I wish they'd done something about my neighbor too, quite frankly."

Lo and behold, we were getting great reviews from the city's citizens! Okay, maybe not quite *great*. Let's go with 'good.' That's fine.

In any event, overpopulation stemming from disorderly building expansions could be dangerous, especially in the event of sudden disasters like fires or earthquakes. Additionally, this kind of architecture was a detriment to the

overall aesthetic of the city, meaning there was nothing positive to gain from any of it. They also tended to become hotbeds for criminal activity, which was why I was handling this myself.

Needless to say, there were also other reasons why I was out here on the front lines wielding my power in broad daylight.

“There is nothing to fear. This good sir is the Fabled Visitor, the disciple of God. The demi-human soldiers who work under him are our good neighbors.”

“We’re giving away clean clothes and fresh bread in the plaza over there!”

As we executed our tyrannical (?) plan, the Adolist clergymen followed behind us, going around handing out goods and informing people that I was the disciple of God in an attempt to win them over.

Was it really okay to advertise how unique I was, you ask? Well, the jig was up the moment Cuvi slipped out of our fingers. And since Elen and I were going to become the symbols of new Adolism moving forward, it was impossible to hide who I was anymore. And if I couldn’t hide myself, it would be foolish not to advertise myself to the world as loudly as possible. That was the conclusion the new Kingdom of Merinard and new Adolism had both come to. And so, a new task was added to my daily rotation: I had to visit the great cathedral in Merinesburg and perform miracles.

My duties weren’t really a big deal. I put on some resplendent clergyman robes, healed the heavily wounded with the “holy cloth and brace” I pulled out of nowhere, healed the sick with my “holy potions” that I whipped out of nowhere, then generated a bunch of bread and clean clothes to hand out.

This went without saying, but this was all made possible by my inventory; I was using splints and potions where applicable. Thanks to my holy actions, folks on the street were calling me all kinds of things now. To some I was the disciple of God, great healer of any and all. To others I was the magician guy. And to some, I was a literal homewrecker. I decided not to think about it too much.

The engine driving all of this was the medicinal herb garden and plot of emergency farmland I built in the castle’s courtyard. The medicinal herbs and crops I was harvesting from there were what I used to make potions, food, and cloth for my clerical (?) activities.

Outside of that stuff, I was helping to cultivate farmland in the neighborhood, holding airboard driving practice, and just getting up to all kinds of business.

“A special envoy from the Dragonis Mountain Nation?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Sylphy. “They say they are here to have an audience with Grande the Dragon and her partner. They also wish to forge diplomatic relations with the new Kingdom of Merinard. They arrived in Arichburg recently, but once they learned that you, me, and Grande were here, they set off for Merinesburg.”

“Huh... Then they’ll be arriving in a few weeks? I’ll probably have left Merinesburg by then.”

Danan was currently leading the Liberation Army and clergymen of Adolism around the nation, taking care of the remnants of the Holy Kingdom army. That wasn’t nearly as violent as it sounded, though: They were basically just going around telling people to lay down their arms.

Alongside the clergymen, Danan and the rest of our people were informing everyone that the 60,000-strong subjugation army was completely and utterly defeated, and that if they surrendered peacefully, they and their families would be spared and looked after until they went back to the Holy Kingdom.

The Holy Kingdom’s army wasn’t necessarily filled with nothing but main-sect loyalists either. Apparently, among the soldiers who were conscripted in Merinard were folks who were secretly in relationships with demi-humans.

There were actually entire Holy Kingdom-occupied regions that were fairly lenient toward demi-humans. Places like where Merinard’s human troops hid; the same place where we parted ways with the demi-humans heading toward the Black Forest.

Now that we had taken Merinesburg and pushed back the Holy Kingdom’s forces, the people hiding out in those areas were beginning to make moves to join us. Recently, we’d been receiving envoys from such regions. Meeting with them was typically Sylphy or Melty’s job, but depending on who the person was, Doriada sometimes stepped forward instead since she had experience with social gatherings in the old Kingdom of Merinard. As the former queen, Serafeeta was in the same boat.

Ah, but I digress.

Travel by airboard was one thing, but moving via carriage was a slow process. The special envoy from Dragonis would very likely arrive in Merinesburg while Elen and I were smoothing things over in the areas Danan was clearing for us. It was possible that Grande would be around, but I wouldn't be.

"Well, they showed up in Arichburg riding wyverns, so they should arrive tomorrow at the earliest," said Sylphy.

"Wyverns, huh? I didn't even know you could ride those."

"I've never seen it myself, but apparently wyverns grow attached to people when they raise them from the moment they hatch."

"Neat. So it must be like a form of imprinting, then." I'd heard that when birds hatched, they immediately recognized the first creature they saw as their parent, though I didn't know if that was the case for every kind of bird or what. Since wyverns also hatched from eggs, maybe they had the same kind of behavior.

"An audience, huh?" I pondered. "What does that even involve?"

"Good question... Perhaps we should ask my mother," Sylphy suggested.

"Serafeeta...?"

Sylphy seemed to sense something from my tone, and her expression darkened. "I really want you to have a good relationship with her..."

"H-hey, look. That shouldn't be a problem."

What I was worried about was having more than just a good relationship with her. I had the feeling I was a bit too popular with the ladies ever since I'd come to this world, and the other day, I finally figured out why. None of this was intentional on my part, and after figuring out what was going on, I tried everything I could to turn off those achievements, but in the end, there was nothing I could do.

The worst part was that those stacked achievements had an insane effect on Serafeeta in particular, so I wanted to avoid too much contact with her. She was a beautiful woman, certainly, but not only was she Sylphy's mother—she was

also a widow...

She *was* tremendously beautiful, though.

“Is that so? I’m glad to hear it,” Sylphy said with a relieved smile.

Please, stop. That pure smile hurts. I know I’m not doing anything intentionally, but it still makes me feel guilty.

If anyone was in the wrong, it was the rat bastard who brought me to this world and stacked me with these ridiculous achievements. Sadly, I had no way of filing a direct complaint with them.

“Th-then I guess I’ll go talk to her.”

“Please do. I don’t have the time to spare,” Sylphy sighed.

It was her lunch break, and we were eating together in the cafeteria, but once we finished, she’d be holed up in her office all day. As the next queen, there was much she needed to attend to, and while I wanted to help, when it came to paperwork, Melty was ten times more effective than I was—especially since she was constantly working with Sylphy.

I would just be in the way.

“Once I finish lunch, I’ll go speak to Serafeeta,” I promised.

“All right. I’ll send someone to let her know you’re coming.”

Sylphy called one of her attendants over and told her to inform her mother of my visit. There was no way she could have known that, in doing this, she was cutting off my avenue of retreat.

Hah hah hah! You’re so adorable, Sylphy!

All I could do was pray that nothing would happen.

“Thank you so much for coming. Please, right this way.”

Upon arriving at my destination, I was greeted with a beautiful, petal-like smile and rose-red cheeks. Before I could even register what was happening, Serafeeta sat me down on an antique-looking chair in front of a stylish tea table.

The attendant in the room deftly prepared tea for us, then returned to the corner of the room from whence she came. I'd never seen her before, and she looked to be a middle-aged canine beastman.

"Her name is Pieta," Serafeeta explained, prompting the attendant to silently smile at me. "She served me even before I fell into my deep slumber. When she heard I was awake and living here in the castle, she came rushing back to me."

There was something about Pieta's behavior—the way she handled herself, even—that seemed off to me.

On closer inspection, I noticed her attendant clothes were a bit strange. She was wearing something resembling a turtleneck that hid the bottom of her neck. I'd spent a not-insignificant amount of time in the castle, so I was fairly familiar with the uniforms of the attendants. It was clear she was wearing something specially tailored.

A sad expression crossed Serafeeta's face when she noticed my gaze.

"Because Pieta was my head attendant, when Merinesburg fell, she was the victim of the Holy Kingdom army's heinous interrogation methods." A deep sadness lined Serafeeta's every word. "They wanted to know if she possessed any secrets involving the royal family. She survived the ordeal, but in exchange she had her throat crushed so she could no longer speak..."

Pieta, on the other hand, smiled warmly and shook her head. Even as an outsider, I could tell she harbored no ill will toward Serafeeta. Twenty years after being brutalized, she'd learned that Serafeeta was okay and immediately she came rushing back to her. Her loyalty knew no bounds.

"Um, if you don't mind, might I see the wound on your throat?" I asked.

"Sir Kousuke?"

"I might be able to heal her."

The splints I crafted were ultimately bandages and braces meant to heal broken limbs, so I had no clue if they'd have any effect on her throat. That said, whenever I placed a brace on an injury and wrapped it in bandages, it seemed to heal any and all old wounds, so it was entirely possible it would work on her throat. This stuff didn't operate on logic, after all.

Pieta seemed hesitant at first but finally submitted after Serafeeta urged her on. She took off her top and stepped forward, presenting her neck to us.

“...Those sons of...”

The scar was awful. I couldn't even begin to imagine how they did this to her, or how she was able to survive the process. I wouldn't have been surprised if they healed her even as they brutalized her in order to prolong her suffering.

If this had happened twenty years ago, then Pieta must have been a teen at the time. Not only did she have her throat crushed, but she was also a demi-human, which meant these last twenty years couldn't have been easy for her.

“...I hope this works.”

I pulled a splint out of my inventory, a particular item that'd been a real MVP as of late, then gently placed the brace against her neck and wrapped it in bandages. Pieta seemed confused as to why she needed a brace, but as soon as I finished wrapping her neck, a pained expression crossed her face.

“...! Ngh!” she grunted as she started to cough.

“Pieta!”

Serafeeta panicked and began to make her way toward her attendant, but Pieta raised a hand and stopped her, taking repeated deep breaths even as she kept coughing. I watched on in silence, relieved that the splint seemed to have worked.

Eventually, the splint around her neck came undone and turned to dust, which then turned into particles of light that disappeared into the air. By this point, Pieta had calmed down.

She let out a deep breath. “A-ah... I... Lady...Serafeeta?”

“Pieta!” Hearing her slightly awkwardly pronounced words, Serafeeta embraced Pieta.

I took a bottle of water out of my inventory, opened the cap, and handed it to the attendant. “Here, have some water.”

“You have...my thanks... Pardon me.” She slowly drank the water, then made a few sounds as she checked on the state of her throat. Serafeeta let go of her

beloved attendant and watched on anxiously. “Aaaah. Lady Serafeeta...”

“Pieta!”

Serafeeta once again embraced Pieta in her arms.

I’m so glad this all worked out. This...feels right. This is how my abilities should really be used. To bring joy to people. To do things that people will be happy about.

“Sir Kousuke, thank you so much. I do not know how I can begin to truly express my gratitude...”

Still hanging on to Pieta, Serafeeta openly sobbed as the words of thanks came flooding out. Pieta cried along with her as she wiped the tears from her mistress’s eyes with a handkerchief.

“I am sorry for such an unsightly display.”

Now that she had redone her makeup, Serafeeta cleared her throat and corrected her posture. Her cheeks were even redder than they were when I first entered the room, probably from embarrassment. Even her ears were slightly flushed.

“There was nothing unsightly about it,” I assured her.

“...It is rather embarrassing for an older woman like myself to sob like a child in front of a gentleman,” she said with a frown. Her words and expression served to remind me that she really was Sylphy’s mother—in other words, she was insanely adorable. “In any event, Sir Kousuke. Let me once again express my gratitude for healing Pieta. I will never forget this.”

“Thank you so much. I vow to serve both you and Lady Serafeeta until the day I am no longer of this world.” Pieta was much more verbose than she had been a moment ago.

“I’m just glad it all worked out.”

“I think I understand now why the saint of Adolism and the archbishop both call you the disciple of God,” Serafeeta said. “The power you yield truly is miraculous... Now then, I heard you wished to discuss something with me

today.”

“Yes. A special envoy from Dragonis will be visiting soon, and their objective is to have an audience with me and Grande. The problem is that I don’t really know what that sort of thing entails or what we should be doing. I was hoping you could lend me your counsel.”

“I see... Dragonis, you say?” She nodded. “It makes all the sense in the world that they would want an audience with Lady Grande, a dragon in human form, and you, her partner. To them, you both share the same relationship as that of their founding dragon and his partner.”

Before I could even notice, the blush had disappeared from her cheeks.

“As far as the audience is concerned, you need not do anything in particular. They were the ones who made the request, which means they are showing deference to you. That also means they are acknowledging your position as above their own. Also, you need not forget that Lady Grande is not the type to show consideration for a human, regardless of their position in our society.”

“That is true.”

Grande only ever acted that way toward someone stronger than her. I was an exception to that rule, yes, but otherwise, she only ever deferred to Melty and Sylphy. That being said, she was a thoughtful person in general, so she never resorted to tyranny or violence. If she ever did, Melty or Sylphy would take her down in a heartbeat.

“If I were to offer you a word of caution, I would advise you to be careful not to commit to anything. I imagine they wish to invite the both of you to their nation and make you a part of it. Either that, or they want to take a potential child born between the two of you as a husband or a bride.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I have heard that over the many years, the dragon blood flowing through the royal family has thinned out significantly. I would not be surprised if they wished to introduce fresh dragon blood into the line.”

“...Are you sure they won’t just try to take Grande and have her be someone’s wife?”

Serafeeta looked on blankly for a moment, then laughed. “Absolutely not. That would only serve to enrage Lady Grande. They will most certainly not make such a proposal. I have heard all about the circumstances leading to Lady Grande’s current form. Perhaps I cannot definitively state they will not make that proposal, but nobody in their right mind would, that much is certain.”

“I hope you’re right.”

If Grande lost it, she’d blow the special envoy away without a second thought, so they couldn’t really make any dumb moves. Hell, I’d probably get blown away along with them.

“You will be fine as long as you speak to them normally and with proper manners,” Serafeeta instructed. “Especially considering they likely wish to summon you both to Dragonis. When the time comes, just give them your answer. All that’s left is how they plan to approach you. The problem is that I cannot even imagine how they will react when faced with two individuals that mirror their founding dragon and bride... Given the timing, I assume they wish to forge diplomatic relations with us.”

“Am I okay to just say yes to that?”

“They may not have many of them, but they do possess wyverns,” she pointed out. “And despite finding them vexing, even the Holy Kingdom recognizes their powers. The empire does as well. They occupy a neutral position between the two warring nations, which would put the new Kingdom of Merinard in an excellent spot, should we gain their support. I am sure both Sylphy and Melty are of the same mind.”

“Gotcha. In that case, I’ll make sure to talk things over with them.”

“Yes, that would be wise. My knowledge is twenty years old at this point, so the state of the world has changed greatly,” Serafeeta said with a bright smile.

After our discussion about Dragonis, I enjoyed my tea with Serafeeta and eventually took my leave.

The former queen was a force to be reckoned with. Before I even realized it, I found myself having tea with her even though I’d intended to head out after our conversation concluded. In fact, I even promised to come back and have

some tea with her again.

Was I going to be okay? I was scared of finding myself in a situation where she was all over me.

I needed to be vigilant. This was my mother-in-law, after all.

Chapter 3:

Visitors from the West

JUST BEFORE NOON the day after I had tea with Serafeeta, things inside the castle started to get busy. Assuming the special envoy must have arrived, I stopped working on the field in the courtyard, washed my hands, and began looking for Grande. I didn't have to go very far, as she was just buried in some cushions in my room.

"Hey, Grande? Those folks I told you about yesterday are here. Get up."

"Mm... Haaah... Those people, eh?" Grande lifted her body from the pile of pillows and stretched out her tail as she yawned.

I'd been putting a cover over her tail recently. Whenever she ate something delicious and felt happy, she typically smashed her tail against the floor and destroyed it, so...yeah.

The tail cover itself was made from pieces of slime that Lime and the others had offered me from their bodies. They were soft and flexible like rubber, while also being tough as all get-out. The perfect kind of material for the job.

"What a nuisance," Grande grumbled. "But if you are by my side, I shall persevere."



“That means a lot. For now, let’s meet up with Sylphy.”

“Mm.”

Grande’s spiky hand gently wrapped itself around mine, so I gripped back as the two of us headed for Sylphy’s office. As we walked along, hand in hand, Grande happily smacked her covered tail against the floor. Apparently, she liked the way it felt when it rebounded.

“I wonder what they want from us... I do not really understand all of this ‘audience’ business.”

“Likewise. I’m guessing since the two of us have the same relationship as their founders, they probably want us to do something for them.”

“Hrmph. I refuse to move a single claw for anyone but you, Kousuke.”

“That puts a big smile on my face, but I would be pleased as punch if you’d at least help Sylphy and Melty when they ask. Even if it’s just every now and then.”

“Mm, every now and then is fine.”

Both Sylphy and Melty understood that Grande was only with us because of her personal relationship with me, so they weren’t in the business of asking her to do jobs for the Liberation Army or the new Kingdom of Merinard.

As we chatted on our way to the office, we eventually spotted Melty walking ahead of us.

“Ah, I was just about to summon you both,” she said.

“The special envoy is here, right? Where are we meeting them?”

“We’ve prepared a special guest room for our discussion. We will be letting them in first, so I would like the two of you to wait in a room nearby.”

“Got it.”

Grande and I relaxed in an adjacent room until an attendant came to lead us to the special guest room. Apparently, in situations like this, it was standard practice for the person or persons of higher status to enter last.

Huh, I thought as I took Grande’s hand and made my way to the room.

Once we arrived, the attendant entered first before guiding us in, where there were three people waiting for us.

One of them was the lizard shaman I'd met in Arichburg before. From what I could remember, he was like a clergyman of the Dragonis Church. From his perspective, anthropomorphic dragons that lived alongside humanity were objects of worship, and since I'd visited a nest of dragons and was recognized as a partner to one, I was a saint to him and his church.

Thinking about it now, the elves referred to me as the Fabled Visitor of Legend, their savior said to have been guided here by the spirits themselves. To the followers of Adolism, I was the disciple of God. To the Dragonis Faith, I was the partner of their living god and a saint. In other words, I was simultaneously all of these things, and I found myself wondering if I would go down in history as a figure that historians doubted ever really existed. It wouldn't be terribly surprising if they decided I was just made up with the intention of tying together a multitude of faiths and influencing major political powers.

One of the other people waiting for us looked to be some sort of lizardman military officer. They didn't have any weapons on them, obviously, but they were wearing leather armor (likely made from wyvern), and they had a sharp look in their eyes. Unfortunately, I had trouble figuring out lizardman genders at a glance, so I couldn't tell if they were male or female.

The final person present was a man in the prime of his life with two prominent horns stemming out of his forehead—more specifically, out of his hairline, gently curving toward the back of his head. The horns were so impressive, in fact, that if someone told me they were dragon horns, I wouldn't doubt it.

"We meet again, old man," I said.

"Indeed," the shaman replied. "I am quite pleased to be in your presence once more. And I am glad that both you and Lady Grande are in good health."

"Mm, that we are." Grande trotted over to recline on the couch facing our visitors. She patted the spot next to her with her tail, signaling that she wanted me to sit next to her.

"Yup, I know. Hang on."

I did as she asked, and she immediately lay down over me, placing her horned head on my lap. She had gotten really good at making sure her horns didn't hurt me.

"I apologize for uh, looking like this," I said. "My name is Kousuke, and while I'm sure you've heard of her, this is Grande. She's a grand dragon."

"Please, you have nothing to apologize for. It is truly wonderful that you both get along so well. Allow me to perform the introductions. This is Sir Lezarus. He has connections to the Dragonis royal family and is in charge of the special envoy. This is Sir Dawn. He is a distinguished warrior who leads the dragoons of Dragonis. He accompanied us on this mission as security and in the hopes of providing some manner of aid to the new Kingdom of Merinard."

"I am Lezarus," said the dragon-like man. "It is a pleasure to meet you, Sir Rider."

"My name is Dawn, and it is a pleasure," the lizardman military officer said. "I'm sorry, but as I'm a warrior, I'm not too good at polite pleasantries. I mean no offense."

Lezarus had a tranquil expression on his face, making him difficult to read, but I felt no antagonistic vibes from him, and I could sense the reverence coming off of Dawn.

"Um, to be honest, I don't really know what to talk about," I said. "We don't really get this whole 'audience' thing, so...yeah."

"Hoh hoh hoh. I imagined as much," the shaman chuckled. "Ah, I do not mean that as an insult. Sir Rider, you are a Fabled Visitor from another world, and Lady Grande is a trueborn dragon; it makes sense that neither of you would be used to our uncultured customs. Sir Lezarus has connections to the royal family, but he is also a researcher of legends. If it is all right with you, we would love to hear how the two of you met, and what you have been up to until now."

"Huh, I see... Well, we've got nothing to hide, so that's fine."

And so I told them all about how we met and our adventures leading up to the present. The older lizardman, Lezarus the researcher, and Dawn the military officer all listened on with great interest.

“Fascinating... An overlord... So she too is your...?”

“Er, yeah. That’s right.”

“I see, I see. It certainly makes sense that if you are able to become the partner of a dragon, you could also charm an overlord.”

“Indeed. However, she must be a fearsome fighter if she is able to take down a dragon with her bare hands... I would love to test my mettle against her.”

“Hah hah... Well, she’s not actually big on fighting.”

Melty did not hesitate to wield her overlord powers when necessary, but normally she put her energy and attention into her work as a civil servant. As far as she was concerned, her tremendous overlord fighting powers were just a means to an end and little more.

“And then you had a chance meeting with Lady Grande’s family in the Black Forest?”

“Yup,” I said. “And let me tell you, they were intense.”

“I do not wish to speak of my family,” Grande yawned, “However, Kousuke was awesome when he defeated my older brothers.”

“Sir Kousuke did that?” Lezarus asked, looking at me in surprise. Dawn’s eyes were widened in shock as well. I couldn’t blame them; I wasn’t exactly the picture of strength.

“Indeed. Kousuke may look weak, but he is the opposite,” Grande bragged. “He is capable of swatting down wyverns like flies, and he can even fire off consecutive attacks capable of piercing dragon scales. Just the other day, Kousuke used his powers to fend off tens of thousands of enemy soldiers.”

“I mean, yes, that was my power, but it’s not like I’m actually physically strong.”

“So you say, but if you wanted to, you could have killed the entire enemy army without help from anyone, correct?”

“Please.” I shrugged my shoulders. The actual truth of the matter was that, yes, I could have done just that.

For example, I could have buried gleaming magic jewel bombs along the Holy Kingdom's infiltration route, then detonated them simultaneously. That would annihilate their entire army in one fell swoop. Hell, I didn't even have to use those awful bombs if I didn't want to. For example, I could have laid down a ton of explosive blocks and blown them up, or I could have made a pillbox and fired heaps of bullets or cannon shells at them. That alone might've been enough to destroy their army.

But I didn't want to do anything as annoying as that, and I didn't think there'd be any point in me doing it alone either. If anything, that could have caused more problems.

"Hrm..." Lezarus nodded a few times. "As I suspected, you must be a tremendous individual to have been chosen to be her partner."

The look Dawn was giving me put me a bit on edge; I had no faith in my ability to wield a sword or a spear, so if he wanted a fight, I'd prefer if he took it to Madame Zamil or someone else instead. Or, if he just wanted to get his butt kicked, I could introduce him to Lime and the others.

Our visitors were fascinated by our tales of the grand dragon nest deep in the Black Forest and the banquet the dragons held for us, especially since that region was something of a holy land to them. They were enthralled from beginning to end.

"That was all tremendously gripping," Lezarus said. "I would love for my fellow countrymen to hear about your exploits."

"If I ever get the chance, certainly," I agreed. "We're really busy right now, however, so that would have to happen further in the future."

"I would imagine as much. Needless to say, there is no need to hurry yourselves. As far as we are concerned, we want to offer you congratulations on the founding of the new Kingdom... No, the restoration of the Kingdom of Merinard."

Suddenly, the aura surrounding Lezarus shifted. The time for casual chitchat was over.

What exactly was he going to throw at us?

“We have come here hoping to receive your consent!”

Here it comes!

I braced myself for whatever they were about to thrust at us. Did they want our future child? What if they wanted Grande herself? My dragon girl seemed to sense my concern and opened a single eye, glancing up at me.

“We wish to receive your permission to spread a portrait of the two of you all throughout Dragonis!”

“...Huh?”

That was unexpected. I figured they were going to force us to comply with some absurd request in exchange for Dragonis’ support.

“Er, that won’t be a problem.”

“Is that so? Thank goodness! Additionally, would it be all right if we spread word of how the two of you had your fated encounter as well?”

“Um, sure?”

“I do not mind either.”

“Ooh! Wonderful! Our people are very interested in learning about how the second coming of our founders first met. The royal family’s authority will only grow stronger if we are able to forge a friendship with the both of you, so I do hope we can have such a relationship moving forward!”

“G-great...”

This cool, horned middle-aged man had a twinkle in his eyes. “Also, those chizburgers and pancakes you mentioned... If at all possible, we would love it if you could share their recipes. Especially as they are Lady Grande’s favorite foods. I am most certain that our people would love to experience the same gourmet fare that drew her eye.”

“Yeah, that’d be fine with me.”

As far as cheeseburgers, ketchup, and pancakes were concerned, Ira discovered that a certain type of ore used as an alchemic recourse could also

function as baking soda, so the crew were spending their days in Arichburg researching all sorts of baked sweets.

They were also studying the baking powder I made using my crafting ability, but apparently, they'd hit something of a wall. This was partially due to the fact that I didn't really understand baking powder in general. I could make the stuff for them, sure, but I couldn't provide them with any additional assistance. All I really knew was that it was made up of baking soda and a bunch of other stuff.

And just for the record, I used the tomato equivalent of this world, the tomel, to make ketchup, which meant it had a different color. Tomels were typically green or yellow fruits, so the ketchup here ended up being one of those two colors. This world also had foods corresponding to cheese and pickles, and for the hamburger patties, I just seasoned some ground meat and cooked it.

Pancakes were no real problem once I discovered baking soda, especially since I still remembered what went into making them. There were parts of the recipe I wasn't entirely sure about, but a little trial and error went a long way toward solving those issues. Nowadays, there were stalls in Arichburg that served hamburgers and pancakes as special Grande-related dishes. Nobody would be losing anything if I spread the recipes around.

"We have a few chefs in the Liberation Army who know the recipes, so we'll have them teach you. I'll talk to Sylphy later and ask her to tell the chefs to share the recipes."

"That would be a huge help. As for the portrait, we had an artist accompany us here, so we can have them draw the two of you at whatever time suits you best."

"Well, I'm fine with whenever. Heck, why not do it after we finish this meeting?"

"Wonderful. You have our gratitude."

"Sir Lezarus," the lizardman shaman cut in over the brightly smiling Lezarus, "is it not rude to make so many requests of them without doing anything in return?"

He panicked and straightened himself out. "You are correct. My apologies, Sir

Rider, Lady Grande. I got ahead of myself in all of this excitement.”

Lezarus sat up straight, cleared his throat, and put on his best serious face. Because he was such a handsome fellow, the second he collected himself, he had this aura of dignity radiating off of him that was kind of comical.

“I am most grateful for how accommodating the two of you have been. From here on out, let us discuss how the Dragonis Mountain Nation plans to act moving forward. We wish to provide you, Lady Grande, and the Kingdom of Merinard with as much aid as possible. That includes dispatching wyverns and dragoons to your country, as well as material goods, funds, and technology we have developed. We are also prepared to provide trade and diplomatic aid as well.”

“That’s...a lot,” I said. “Isn’t it a bit much in return for a portrait, the story of how we got together, and a few recipes?”

Quite frankly, the return on what we were offering them seemed excessive. Even if we were in the same position as their founders, the cost they were paying for forming a friendly relationship with us seemed way out of balance.

“Not at all,” Lezarus replied. “This is a proper political and military transaction as much as it is anything else. If the Kingdom of Merinard and its royal family are able to restore their influence, the Holy Kingdom will no longer be able to apply as much military pressure on us as they do now, which will grant us peace of mind. Do not take this the wrong way, but the Kingdom of Merinard is in a position to serve as an exceedingly useful shield for us.”

“I see.”

“Additionally, the queen of the new Kingdom of Merinard is in a position to do trade with the elves of the Black Forest. We would love to get our hands on the goods they offer.”

“Right, right. I forgot that because Dragonis can do long-distance trade through their flying dragons, you guys have foreign currency.”

Wyverns could ignore the geography of an area and soar straight to their destination, making them Dragonis’s primary means by which to acquire foreign currency. It also kept them safe from being attacked by bandits, letting them

carry all manner of goods over a superlong distance. This brought about huge profits for Dragonis.

“Correct.” Lezarus wore a gentle smile on his face. “Ever since the Kingdom of Merinard ceased to exist twenty years ago, we’ve been unable to acquire any of the goods that the elves of the Black Forest possess. As a result, their market price has skyrocketed. If we are able to once again purchase such goods, I believe we will be able to obtain further fortunes.”

I wasn’t exactly informed on the state of the world, so I couldn’t say one way or another if any of this was true, but as far as I could tell, he was crossing all of his T’s and dotting all of his I’s. I couldn’t commit to anything without discussing things with Sylphy and Melty first, but none of this sounded like a bad deal.

“You know, I thought you were going to come out and request that Grande and I hand over our future child or something,” I admitted. “Worst-case scenario, I was bracing myself for you to ask for Grande herself.”

“Perish the thought!” Lezarus gasped. “We of the Dragonis Mountain Nation would never come between the two of you. Doing such an awful thing would be rubbing mud over the founding legend of our nation, then trampling and spitting on it. I swear to our ancestors, we would never ever consider such a vulgar idea. If there is someone who is considering it, we will do everything in our power to burn them to ash.”

“O-oh, cool.”

Terrifying!

The look in Lezarus’s eyes was real. Super duper real. He truly believed the words that came out of his mouth, and Dawn and the lizard shaman off to his sides were nodding in agreement. The reverence they had for us was far more powerful than I could have ever imagined.

“As far as your future son or daughter is concerned, we would certainly be overjoyed if we could one day summon them to Dragonis, but to use that as a contractual condition... That would be blasphemous. We do not wish to take advantage of you; we simply want to forge a friendship,” Lezarus said, casting his straightforward gaze on the both of us.

Grande was the next to speak up. “Kousuke, worry not. It is clear as the morning sky that these men have no ill intentions toward us. More importantly, I am rather famished.”

“Ah, right... Okay. In that case, I think we can proceed forward under the assumption that we’re good to go on everything we discussed here. For the actual paperwork and the like, it’d be best to talk things over with Sylphy and Melty, so I’ll put word in so you can have an official meeting with them.”

“Understood. Thank you for your consideration.”

After we finished our talks, I offered them Grande’s favorite cheeseburgers, pancakes loaded with cream and jam, and some pudding while we engaged in a friendly chat. They seemed to enjoy the pudding the best, so when I offered to share the recipe with them, they nearly leaped for joy.

And so our formal talks...our audience? I didn’t even know what to call it anymore. In any case, our conversation ended in the most peaceful way imaginable. And I was throwing the actual work over to Sylphy and Melty since I was useless when it came to nation-level military affairs or economics.

I was more than aware of where my talents lay, thank you very much.

“Thanks to you and Grande, it looks like negotiations with Dragonis are going to turn out great,” Melty said. She sat next to me on a rattan couch, smiling broadly. “However, there are some things I would like a few more details on, so I hope you do not mind.”

I could never turn her down when she asked with that smile of hers. “As long as you give me a heads up first, no problem. You know how busy I’ve been lately. Just keep in mind that Grande’ll only do something if she feels like it; I really don’t want to force her into anything.”

“But of course.”

The night after we finished our audience (talks?) with Dragonis, it was time for our post-dinner chill time, and that had Melty in a wonderful mood. I was personally pleased that Grande and I were able to contribute to her good state of mind.

“I certainly did not expect to forge a relationship like this.” Sylphy, sitting on my opposite side, was in a great mood too. “Dragonis plans on providing us with support on every conceivable level. I imagine other foreign nations will make similar moves in response. Depending on how Dragonis proceeds, countries on the western side of the Holy Kingdom could start forming alliances with one another, and if that happens, we might be able to reconcile with the enemy much more simply than we anticipated.”

Sylphy would soon be entering official talks with the Holy Kingdom, so the fact that she was able to acquire aid from Dragonis, a nation that even the Holy Kingdom and the empire were keeping tabs on, must have been a big boost to her morale.

“As an outsider, I probably have no right to say this, but try to keep your guard up, okay?” I said. “Regardless of how friendly they are toward us, specifically to me and Grande, they’re still a kingdom with a long history. I doubt they would ever do anything that would result in losses for only them, and if they saw it to be necessary, they would freely abandon the Kingdom of Merinard. As far as they’re concerned, as long as me and Grande are safe, nothing else matters.”

I remembered hearing some saying back on Earth about how there was no true friendship between countries. Or was that about allies? Either way, I got the gist of it. Regardless of how friendly another government seemed, they would always be acting primarily with their own vested interests in mind. In other words, if their interests butted heads, yesterday’s allies could become today’s enemies.

In that sense, Grande and I were sparks that could potentially ignite a war between Merinard and Dragonis. We were simultaneously a makeshift bridge between the two nations and the potential trigger for all-out war.

Right now, the two of us were providing our support to the Liberation Army—or I guess it was more accurate to say that just I was. As such, Dragonis expressed the desire to provide the Liberation Army and the new Kingdom of Merinard with as much support as possible. This was their attempt to respect our intentions.

However, if they changed their minds and tried to take myself and Grande by force, we would enter full scale war with Dragonis. Though I didn't suspect we would lose in that case; if they came at us with wyverns and dragoons, I would end up mowing them down with 7mm heavy machine guns.

Iron, steel, and leather. Requisitioning the Holy Kingdom army's weapons the other day had left us with an abundance of all those resources, and I was using them to secretly mass-produce ammo just in case... That being said, 7.92mm light machine guns were overkill right now, so 12.7mm heavy machine guns would probably never see any real action.

"I am well aware of that," Sylphy assured me. "Not to mention, a country is not in good shape if it must cling to another in order to survive. Everything in moderation."

"And thanks to you, we have no want for food, funds, or materials," Melty added. "I imagine their aid will mostly come in the form of diplomatic assistance. Though eventually, we will have to rectify how much we rely on you for things."

"Yeah, that makes sense."

It was clear as day that without the benefits my power granted, the current Kingdom of Merinard would collapse on itself. Right now, all of the food, funds, and materials required to keep the nation going was being provided by a single person, and that was anything but healthy. It was in our best interest to fix this as soon as possible.

"That being said, I'll be bored out of my mind when that happens," I admitted.

"Really?" Melty grinned from my right. "I don't think you'll have time to be bored..."

On my left, Sylphy gazed at me seductively. "Right you are."

Did I just step onto a land mine?

"I heard Princess Doriada wanted to talk to you," Melty remarked. "What do you want, Kousuke?"

"You've been quite friendly with Mother as of late, yes?" said Sylphy. "She

always talks about you. In fact, she wanted to know how you were doing.”

“Ah... Right. That whole conversation.”

I cast my gaze up at the ceiling as I felt their eyes on my cheeks. What did I want? How was I supposed to answer this? “I’m already loaded with partners...” is what I wanted to say, but marriage was treated differently here.

“I suppose what I want is pretty important here, huh?”

“It is. However, the only one who has actually said she wishes to have a formal relationship with you is Princess Doriada.”

“I see... How do you two feel about this? Should I even be asking you that...?”

In the end, I was the one who would be making the final call. Asking them a question like this was just me seeking an excuse for when I eventually said yes. “Oh, I did it because they told me to.” That was nothing if not cowardly.

“Hrm...”

“You can be so unmotivated when it comes to relationships with women.”

“The sense of ethics I’ve built up since I was a kid, the way I view marriage... It’s hard trying to overturn all of that, y’know?”

While I was busy staring at the ceiling and trying to work things out, I could tell the girls were discussing something, but none of it was actually entering my ears.

Okay, so. That’s not only Sylphy, but Ira, the harpies, Elen, Melty, and Grande that I’ve sealed the deal with. I suppose not much changes if I add another two women to the list... Er, but wait. There’s also Amalie and Belta. So that’d be four more women total. The harpies alone are nearly twenty people, so I guess it’s not that big of a deal, but is that really the issue here?

“I suppose we can at least see how things go to start off with,” I said.

“Regardless of how they might feel about me, I’m not really sure how I feel about all of this. I want to take things slow, talk it out, spend some time together, and get to know one another.”

“That’s understandable,” said Melty. “Both Princess Doriada and Lady Serafeeta have all the time in the world, after all.”

“Mother... I suppose she does.”

“Actually, about that...” I turned to Sylphy. “How do you feel about me having that kind of relationship with Serafeeta?”

“Apparently, it is not tremendously rare among long-lived races,” she said, a complex expression on her face. “I certainly never expected to be in that position, though, if that is what you are asking.”

“I suppose you both share the same taste in men.”

“I don’t think it’s that,” I admitted. “I’m starting to suspect my powers have something to do with it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well...”

I explained to both women about my achievements and their effectiveness on members of the opposite sex. They both tilted their heads at me.

“I don’t think that has anything to do with it. It is not as though you’ve looked into whether their effectiveness works like charm magic, correct?”

“Huh? Er, I guess not. I don’t have any way to test it out, after all.”

Since there was no way to turn my achievements off, I had no way to test any of my theories on the matter. I just suddenly found myself with a whole bunch of new ones, and it wasn’t as though they let me see affection points or anything.

“I don’t think you have anything to worry about. If those achievements of yours are at work, then all that really does is make you more attractive. Those abilities are part of who you are as a person, so what’s the harm?”

“If you reject that part of yourself, what about the poor yamazoku?” Melty said.

“Yamazoku?” I repeated. Like King Yemma from that one show?

“Spelled with the characters for ‘night’ and ‘magic.’ They’re also called dream demons. Definitely never call them succubi—that would be offensive. They are an all-female race, but they naturally emanate charm magic, making them a

difficult people to contend with.”

“That does sound rough... Though I doubt I’ve ever met one.”

Despite what Melty said, they probably were like actual succubi. I’d seen people with bat-like wings before, but they never aroused anything in me, so they must’ve been something different.

“No, you most definitely have,” Melty insisted. “They even said that because they can show you their true face, look you in the eyes, and even bare their skin around you without a reaction, it’s a huge relief.”

“Seriously...? Well, that sort of magic typically doesn’t work on me.”

So it seemed I had met them before. Actually, now that I thought about it, I had encountered someone who seemed to frequently look me straight in the eyes and wear revealing attire. I was flustered because I didn’t know where to look, but because she never said anything, I just moved on.

Maybe she was a bit socially awkward because her kind got used to unconsciously radiating charm magic all the time.

“But I digress. What I wanted to say is that much like how that is simply a part of who dream demons are, your abilities are a part of what makes you attractive as well. I don’t think you have any reason to overthink it.”

“I guess not...”

“Instead of fidgeting over your so-called powers, please accept the feelings others have for you and give them a proper answer. Unlike the Adolism situation, this is something that Sylphy even supports.”

“This isn’t about lending you out as a studhorse, after all,” Sylphy interjected, looking like she was about to click her tongue.

“There’s not much we can say when they bring up the difference in our life spans,” said Melty, gently caressing my chest. “I do feel bad about pushing this all on you, in the end.”

Wait, when did she get so close? In fact, she was basically on top of me...

Um, Sylphy? Et tu?

“It truly does break my heart. Frustrating, even.”

“I’m sure they’ll be pregnant in less than a year.”

“Humans are short-lived, but it is much easier for them to bear children.”

“Ladies? Um, please calm down.”

At this point, I was already holding both women in my arms, and there was no way I could fight them off—mentally or physically.

“Okay, okay! Let’s just take a moment! How about we talk things over? Don’t worry! As long as we talk it out—don’t give up! Don’t uyrghpdfb!”

The women had started dragging me over to the bed. I wasn’t actually fighting back with any seriousness, but they nonetheless didn’t budge a bit—our physical specs were just too different.

Sylphy tossed me onto the bed. “For all your griping, your body seems perfectly happy to come along for the ride,” she said, licking her lips as she looked down at me. Her pointed ears twitched excitedly. Good for her!

“Isn’t that the kind of line I should be saying?” I said. “Also, you should know better than most that I could never physically resist either of you.”

“Gosh, how could you say that about fragile maidens such as ourselves?” Melty said with a frown as she began to undress me. “You make it sound like we’re the strong ones, Kousuke.”

“Just to be clear, fragile maidens would never be able to physically drag an adult man into bed and tear his clothes off...”

“Are you discontent?”

“To be honest, I’m pretty into it these days. Ah, wait. No need to get rough! If you both come at me with your stamina, I’m gonna shrivel up! I don’t have the endurance! Gaaaah!”

Save me, Grande!

“Don’t you look exhausted.”

After finishing breakfast the next day, I wandered aimlessly toward the

courtyard, where I bumped into Elen. Today she was clad in saintly robes with gold thread ornamentation, giving her a radiance that was almost divine.

“Ah, yeah...” But all I could offer her in response was an energyless few words. At this point, I was at less than a third of my maximum HP and stamina. In other words, I was basically dead.

“My word. What exactly have you been getting up to without me?” Elen complained, raising her hand toward me.

“Well...”

Her hand began to radiate light.

Aaah, this feels good. I focused my attention toward the HP and stamina gauges at the corner of my vision and watched as they both filled up rapidly. This was the same miracle she’d cast on me before.

“You’re a real lifesaver,” I told her.

“Just for the record, that miracle was strong enough to completely heal five seriously wounded people.”

“Seriously?”

“I swear, you have the life force of a cockroach.”

“Could you please not compare me to a roach? Anyway, thanks.”

My gratitude was earnest. Normally it would’ve taken me at least half a day to recover from that state. As long as I rested and ate properly, I’d heal up, but quite frankly it just kind of sucked to feel so exhausted.

“Oh, now that I have you here,” Elen said, “I heard you met with the special envoy from Dragonis yesterday.”

“Yeah. Any thoughts to share?” Her tone led me to believe that she had something to say, so I urged her to continue.

But she shook her head. “No, nothing in particular. The adherents of the Dragon Faith they follow are lizardman, lamia, and other demi-humans, which do not typically overlap with followers of Adolism. I would hope that we can respect one another, and at worst, not interfere with each other’s affairs.”

“Your vibes are telling me that’s not all.”

“Well, since they are treating you as a saint too, I am worried that we will be dragged into a power struggle with them.”

“Gotcha. Honestly, I think it’ll be fine. It doesn’t seem like they’re going to try and control how Grande and I act.” It was more like they wanted to respect how we were in the here and now. To them, we were literal idols. Objects of worship.

“I hope so,” Elen sighed. “Have you made any progress on your preparations for our journey?”

“Yeah, somewhat. I’m finished modifying the airboards, and I’ve already started training our folks. How about you?”

“We’ve finished picking out which clergymen will be coming with me and have been reading the new sacred texts together to closely examine their teachings.”

“Cool... Do you have enough copies? We’re gonna be handing them out and stuff, right?”

If we were going to be spreading these new (old) teachings, we needed to distribute as many copies of the sacred texts as possible. We also needed to figure out what to do with the texts from the main faction and how we would handle folks who refused to follow the new teachings.

“Hm, to be honest, it will be a bit difficult to acquire as many copies as we need,” Elen said. “We have made progress on transcribing the text, but there are limits to what we can accomplish by hand. We do not have the time to print copies using wood block prints.”

“I’d figure not.”

Woodblock printing was doable in this world, but not to the point where thick sacred texts could be mass produced in the span of a few weeks. In order to do that, we’d need to produce a ton of wood block prints, and even then, it would take a lot of effort to print and bind the books. Of course, that was still way faster than trying to transcribe everything by hand.

“Now that I think about it, I still have a copy in my inventory from when we visited the ruins.”

“You are only just remembering this now? These are precious texts, you know?”

“My bad.”

I calmed Elen as she flashed a glare my way, then pulled the copy out of my inventory and trotted over to the work hut in the courtyard. I’d gotten permission to build it in the corner of the area, and inside of it were various workbenches for different tasks.

“What are you planning on doing?”

“I wanna see if I can replicate this thing using my workbench.”

“Is that actually possible?”

“We’re about to find out.”

I opened the golem workbench menu, then slipped the copy into its inventory. I also put in a load of paper I’d made using plant fibers and black ink I’d crafted using soot, charcoal, and oil.

“Mrmrm... Roar, my Cosmo!”

“Cosmo...?”

I ignored Elen, who seemed deeply confused, and focused my attention on item creation. To be honest, focusing basically amounted to me hoping and praying that a new item would be added to the craft item section. Even now, I still didn’t really get how any of this item creation stuff worked; it just kinda looked like it happened if I hoped for it hard enough.

“Is roaring going to do something?” she asked.

“Maybe? Maybe not.”

“What the heck?”

With Elen completely exasperated off to the side, I scrolled through the craft item list in search of my objective.

Copy of the Year 109 Kingdom of Omitt Adolism Sacred Scripture

Materials: Ink × 2, Paper × 10

“I did it! I made a copy of the text!”

“Really?” Elen leaned close to me excitedly... She smelled delightful. “Where is it?”

Her red eyes stared discontentedly at me from zero-range. How impatient she was.

“It’s only just been added to my crafting list,” I told her. “I’m going to craft it now, so hold on.”

For the time being, I put in an order for a hundred copies. Each volume would take approximately three minutes, so we were looking at three hundred minutes total—so five hours. It was kind of insane that I could produce a complete book in just three minutes.

“I’m going to make one hundred copies to start with, so sit tight. One book’ll take about three minutes.”

“One hundred volumes? Are you telling me that it will only take you five hours to make a hundred volumes?”

“That’s how it all adds up, yeah.”

“...What tremendous power. In some ways, this is far more impressive than how you make weapons and food.”

“You think...? I mean, now that you mention it...”

Knowledge was power. Unlike weapons, armor, or currency, knowledge was a form of power that no one could ever take from you as long as you were alive. Books were one of the most effective ways to attain knowledge, and being able to mass-produce books like this meant that I could create throngs of people who possessed power that nobody could ever take from them.

“The problem is that if I just use my power all willy-nilly, I could break the economy and hurt the livelihoods of others,” I said. “Any kind of production line

that relies solely on my power is a broken one, and I can't and shouldn't use it too much."

"That makes a lot of sense. It would be best for you to use it in a supportive fashion, to fill in the holes when others need assistance. That way, you will avoid causing strife."

The first volume finished while we discussed the matter. I pulled it from the golem workbench and handed it over to Elen.

"...These characters are tremendously easy to read."

"Lemme see? Whoa, you're right. It's like proper printed text."

The characters were all equal in size and shape, making it very easy to parse. This was 100 percent printed text.

"The publication information reads 'Year 109 of the Kingdom of Omitt,'" Elen observed. "The same as the original."

"It's a copy, after all. Sorry, but there's not much I can do about that."

"I understand. We can fix this on our end."

Was she planning on rewriting the publication dates by hand or something?

"So only you can produce these, correct?"

"Yup."

"Five hours..."

"Just for the record, you don't have to wait here or anything."

The workbench would handle the process automatically, so all we had to do was come back when it was done. She could leave to take care of other things if she wanted to.

"...Do you really hate spending time with me that much?"

"Whoa, not at all. I just figure you must be super busy."

"I am fine," she insisted, gazing up at me with her red eyes, her body close to mine. "Considering I'll be coming back with one hundred volumes of copied sacred texts, I'm sure I can get away with disappearing for a bit."

As far as my schedule was concerned, I didn't need to meet with anyone for the day. I did have to get ready for our trip, but there was a lot I could get done in this hut.

"...Okay," I agreed. "In that case, let's take our time and work on these copies. How's that sound?"

"Wonderful." Elen nodded, her cheeks turning a faint shade of red.

All right, I should put away any workbenches I won't be using and get a table and couch out of my inventory...

Chapter 4:

Engaging with Domestic Law and Order

I HAD TEA WITH ELEN, then, come evening, I relaxed on the couch talking to Sylphy, developed new magic tools with Ira, cultivated the field, cultivated the field, and cultivated the field some more as the days went by.

No, seriously. The field was pretty big now, and it wasn't made of farm blocks either. I genuinely just cultivated the area. Doing that was enough to improve the harvest, and it sped up the process, to boot.

At any rate, I had to make sure that all the demi-humans who'd been made into slaves—and barely given anything to eat all that time—had all the food they'd ever need, now that they were free. That was our responsibility as a country. As such, I turned myself into a field-cultivating machine.

Obviously, I wasn't working alone. I had to be the one to cultivate the land, but the clearing process was being handled by all kinds of people working hard for the cause.

The main source of labor in this process were formerly enslaved demi-humans, but I was also getting aid from second sons of farming families who weren't able to inherit their parents' land, plus Liberation Army soldiers who had time to spare.

Back to the subject at hand.

I spent several days like this until it was finally time to set out on our journey to preserve law and order in the land.

Accompanying Elen and I were her retainers (and my bedroom partners) Amalie and Belta. Madame Zamil was coming as a bodyguard. Additionally, Danan was here as the commander in charge of the soldiers. From the harpy squad were Pirna and her women, plus two airboards from the rifle squad. Then we also had Danan's elite troops and a few dozen brothers and sisters from Elen's sect of Adolism. Last but not least, we also had a few dozen civil servants

from the Liberation Army.

We were looking at five hundred or so people in total, which was on the low side. Since I was on board, we didn't need any supply personnel. We were all going to be traveling via large transport airboards that were modified to carry people.

The morning of our departure, Serafeeta gripped my hand in hers and squeezed tightly as she saw me off with tears in her eyes. "Safe travels."

"Ah, ha ha ha. No worries, we'll be fine."

This is fine. Everything is fine. Oh, jeez. Everyone's looking at me. This stings.

"...Mrm." Sylphy put her hand on her jaw thoughtfully.

Ira's eye widened in shock. "Whoa..."

Meanwhile, Melty grinned like a little prankster. "...I see."

Sylphy's sisters were watching too. "Oh, gosh," said Doriada, a suspicious smile on her lips.

"Wait, what???" Ifriita seemed visibly shaken, struggling to process what was happening.

"..." Aqual simply watched on in a daze.

Doriada was one thing, but apparently this came as quite the shock to both Ifriita and Aqual; they looked bewildered.

And Grande, you ask? She was planning on lounging in the castle. She'd be safe there, and she had no intention of involving herself in human politics.

The harpies were excitedly yelling all kinds of things. From their perspective, the fact that I was acquiring more partners meant they were gaining more friends, and to them I was super sexy for charming so many women. They were all about that harem life.

And then there was them.

"...Mrm."

"...Wow."

“...I see.”

Let’s just say that this specific trio of Adolist faithful weren’t exactly thrilled. One of them was expressionless and the other two were smiling, but I had zero faith that those smiles were genuine. I had a hunch that they suspected I’d sealed the deal with Serafeeta over the last few days, but that wasn’t remotely the case. All I was doing was tending to the fields!

“Mother, I would also like to see Kousuke off if you do not mind,” Sylphy said.

“Right, of course. Sir Kousuke, please take care.”

Serafeeta gave me a hug, then after pressing something soft against my cheek, stepped away. Had she just kissed me? That was rather forward of her.

Sylphy smiled, pinching the cheek I’d just been kissed on. “Stop panting like a dog.”

“Ow.”

She turned my head, so I was looking directly at her, and kissed me on the lips. And let me tell you, this was a deep kiss. In fact, the harpies were hooting and hollering.

“...I forgive you.”

“Kaaay.”

Sylphy released me and stepped away, but I didn’t feel any less like I was about to collapse to my knees. But before I could think about it too much, a small shadow approached me and hugged my waist. I didn’t need to look to know it was Ira who’d tackled me so passionately.

“Don’t forget about me,” she said.

“Excuse me?”

“I want one too.” Ira looked up at me with her big eye. I glanced at Melty to try to get some help, but...

“I’m next,” she said with an angelic yet demonic smile on her face.

I was foolish for having sought her help at all. Hah hah hah.

“I believe you need to exercise a bit more discretion.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Do not give me that. Are you even listening? From here on out, you must stand by my side as one of the symbols of the new Adolism and help guide our followers. And yet here you are...doing...doing...”

Elen was sitting behind me and smacking the back of my head with the palms of her hands as she complained at me. Amalie and Belta, riding the same airboard as us, watched on silently.

After everything that happened, the harpies who were staying behind showed up, and so did the slime girls, and things got kind of crazy. Crazy in what way? I have no intention of explaining that much. Let’s just say that Ifriita’s face turned bright red as she fled the scene, and Aqual started panicking.

I understood what Elen was saying, but there was no way I could physically resist the slime girls. They were insanely powerful, and the only ones who could ever hope to match them head-on were Sylphy, Melty, and Grande.

“Now, now, Lady Eleonora,” Amalie said. “I too was surprised, but if that is a part of Merinard’s culture, then we should not be chastising him too much.”

“Exactly,” Belta agreed. “Regardless of whether we follow suit or not, I do not believe Sir Kousuke could have done much in that situation...”

I was surprised they were willing to defend me. I wished they’d done it a little sooner, but there was no point in saying that now. To be quite honest, no matter how much Elen lectured me about being more careful moving forward, I had no clue how to actually put that into practice. Once Lime and the others showed up, it was checkmate for me.

“Mrm... But could he not be a bit more resolute? More modest?” Elen said.

“Sir Kousuke is a kind man, so I believe it would be difficult for him to be like that toward someone approaching him with genuine affection.”

“Consider that, despite you being his enemy at the time, he still risked his life to save you.”

“Grrr... Mrm!”

Thanks to Amalie and Belta stepping in, Elen was reduced to an adorable little pouting creature. Thinking back on it, even though she was hitting the back of my head, it was more as if she was just trying to express her dissatisfaction with the situation than actual anger. She must have been holding herself back too, since it didn't hurt at all.

"That being said, it would be nice if you paid a little more attention to us," Amalie added. "Lady Eleonora has been feeling very lonely as of late."

So that was the problem. It wasn't as though I was intentionally avoiding her, it was just that she'd been so busy ever since Archbishop Deckard arrived that I felt like I needed to stay out of her way. I had things I needed to take care of on my end too, and I'd always been a bit of a night owl, whereas Elen led a healthy lifestyle and went to bed early most of the time. In the end, we never had much time to just sit down and talk.

The other day we might've had the chance to spend some time together, but High Priestess Katalina showed up before we could finish the hundred copies and took Elen away. Things kept lining up that way, and then she saw that Serafeeta and I had gotten strangely close to one another, plus a whole bunch of other things...which ended up leading to her discontent and frustration exploding in one fell swoop.

"I plan on making up for everything to the best of my abilities," I promised.

"Thank you," said Amalie. "But remember that while we are on this journey, it is generally our job to take care of you, so I do hope we can perhaps get to know each other better as well."

"Yes," Belta agreed. She and Amalie were both wearing sunny smiles. "The harpies have also agreed to let us have your time as well."

Oh, I get it. So that's the true point of all of this, eh?

Now that I thought about it, it was Archbishop Deckard who'd said that these two should be in charge of taking care of me, not just Elen. He was also the one who recommended we take other clergymen with us. Had he planned this from the start?

No. There was no way such a good-natured older man like him would...

Actually, no, there was a good chance he would. I had to remind myself that he'd managed to acquire and maintain the position of archbishop within the nest of schemers that was Adolism—and he did that while opposing the main sect, to boot.

“...Please be gentle,” I begged.

At this point, I needed to accept my fate. Whether this was good or bad was ultimately up to me.

If only I was the sort of guy who'd get excited over a woman's advances.

Once all the lecturing was out of the way, it was time to begin our journey in earnest.

The airboard we were riding was located in the center of the larger formation, so we were basically just following the airboard in front of us. Given how many people and vehicles we were traveling with, we obviously couldn't drive at full speed, so we were moving at a moderate pace. We were definitely faster than a carriage, though.

And of course, I was driving the airboard that we were riding in. It was me, Elen, Amalie, and Belta, making for a total of four people. Madame Zamil was riding in the airboard directly in front of us. In other words, it was just us four in here.

“What a fascinating vehicle,” Belta observed. “It is faster than a carriage, yet it does not shake at all.”

“It can be quite painful on the hips and behind to ride in a carriage for long hours,” added Amelie.

They both appeared to be deeply impressed by the comfortable ride. Their reflections in the back mirror revealed the excited expressions of a pair of young women, not the pious sisters and discreet ladies they usually were.

“Oooh...”

Elen was no different in that regard; she was plastered to the window, watching the scenery go by. Her usual expressionless look was gone, replaced

with a childlike glee, her eyes sparkling with excitement.

After checking on them through the back mirror, I turned my attention back to the road. The vehicle Madame Zamil was riding in was one of the rifle squad's technical airboards. She was sitting on the rear tray designed for the gunner, looking back at me. If something happened in here, she was ready to come flying to my aid.

With things going fairly smoothly, it was time to think over this entire trip.

The objective of our little adventure was to maintain law and order throughout Merinard. There were still a number of cities and armed forces under the influence of the Holy Kingdom, and we needed to get them under control one way or the other—through force, if necessary.

We'd been sent envoys from towns and cities on the outskirts of Merinesburg, all expressing their allegiance to Sylphy and the new government, so from a military perspective, we were pretty much done seizing territory. We were going to be visiting those cities and using Elen's powers and position to perform inquiries and inspections while I used my powers to solve the various problems the people were having. If it proved necessary, the rifle squad, Danan and his elites, and the harpies with their bombs could handle any physical altercations.

The clergymen and civil servants were traveling with us so that they could replace any powerful people in the local government, including religious leaders, even if it meant sending heads rolling—though I doubted it would come to that. According to Melty, however, that was entirely possible.

Quite frankly, I was scared of punishing the wrong people, but with Elen's eyes, that was an impossibility. It wasn't hard to imagine that the top brass who had been getting away with whatever they wanted were quaking in their boots in anticipation of our arrival. Obviously, they'd be put on wanted lists if they fled, and there was no way they'd be able to flee from the harpies or the carnivorous demi-humans. Plus, we had airboards, which were much faster than carriages.

After driving for a bit, Elen grew bored of watching the scenery and soon cast her gaze upon me, which I noticed through the back mirror.

“What’s up?” I asked her.

“I am bored.”

“I’m not sure what you want me to do about that.”

I was in the middle of driving, after all, and since we were moving along at a pretty fast speed, there was no way I could take my eyes off the road. I had no desire to cause any kind of accident.

“Talk about something,” she suggested.

“Are you seriously asking me that?!” I sputtered. “Amalie, help me!”

“I would love to hear all about you,” Amalie said.

“Likewise,” said Belta.

“Do I have no allies?” My passengers were expecting me to behave like one of those chatty, affable taxi drivers. The three clergywomen on my airboard were asking the impossible of me.

“I mean, what do you want me to talk about?”

“Anything is fine, but... Oh, I know,” said Amalie. “How about this? What have you been moved by most since coming to this world?”

“Huh, good question...” There had been quite a bit. “I’m not sure this counts as being moved, but I was definitely shocked when I bumped into demi-humans for the first time.”

“How so?” Amalie asked, tilting her head.

For someone who was born and raised in a world where demi-humans naturally existed, I could understand why my comment was a bit baffling.

“Well, there are no demi-humans in the world I came from,” I explained. “There were differences in skin color, body types, language, and culture, but my world only had regular old humans. So you can imagine my surprise when I first saw Sylphy. I was even more stunned when she took me to the elf village in the Black Forest. Beastmen, lizardmen, Lamia, winged races, cyclops, ogres, and so much more.”

“I see... A world of only humans, huh? That sounds like exactly the kind of

world the Holy Kingdom desires.” Belta’s focus was less on what I was surprised by and more on why I was surprised in the first place.

“Well, we had plenty of wars in my old world, but since we didn’t have Adolism or magic, it would make no sense to treat the two worlds the same way.”

“I see... No miracles or magic then... But, Sir Kousuke?”

“Yes?”

Belta crept up behind me and brought her lips close to my ear. Whoa! Too close!

“You speak in such a casual tone with Lady Eleonora, yet you still address us so formally. It is a bit off-putting.”

I glanced to my side and saw Belta’s face up super close. She was a beautiful woman with finely chiseled features reminiscent of a foreigner’s, and that came off all the more imposing at this range. Her super dark brown eyes flashed with discontent.

“I’ll try my best to fix that,” I told her. “It’ll take me some time, though.”

“...Then I suppose we must be patient.” Seemingly satisfied with my answer, she returned to her rear seat. The way she suddenly got close like that threw me off big time. Belta was more aggressive than I thought; or maybe it was more accurate to describe her as full of energy.

“Sir Kousuke, I too look forward to speaking in a more casual fashion with you,” Amalie chimed in.

“Okay, yeah. I’ll do my best.”

Both Belta and Amalie came off as broad-minded adult women with blindingly holy auras, which made it difficult to approach them in a casual fashion. But since they were asking me directly to address that, I’d have to do what I could.

“Is there anything else?”

“For sure. Too much, even. I was blown away the first time I saw magic.”

“What kind of magic was it?”

“Healing magic cast through life spirits. Oh, and just to be clear, I was the one being healed. Sylphy attacked me while I was sleeping and beat me half to death, then interrogated me. It was so bad that I couldn’t even speak. I thought my nose was broken, among other things.”

“...How awful.”

“Seriously. It was the worst.”

Looking back on it now, she really went to town on me. Given her position, it was all pretty inevitable, but that didn’t make it hurt any less. Though to be honest, if Sylphy wasn’t the one who’d found me, I probably would’ve been killed before the interrogation could even happen, so I didn’t hold any grudges over how that went down.

“Let’s see, what else... Ah, the first time I saw a gizma! Now that was crazy. Have you ever seen one before?”

“No. They are a type of insect monster native to the Omitt Badlands, yes?”

“Those are the ones. They’re ferocious and carnivorous, to boot. Each one is about the size of a single carriage, and they come rushing in with their fierce hind legs and thrusting attacks using their haptic senses. My old world had no monsters, so you can imagine how terrified I was when I saw how big those things were. In fact, this entire world is filled with plants and animals that are kind of the same but totally different, so I end up being astounded every time I stumble on a new one.”

“Such as?” Elen asked from the back seat. I was keeping my eyes on the road, so I couldn’t see her, but I suspected she was tilting her head curiously.

“So there are tons of vegetables here I’ve never seen,” I said, “but there are also a bunch that are similar looking to the ones in my world, only they’re differently colored. Sometimes they look the same but taste completely different. For example, tomels here are typically yellow or green, right? In my world, they were bright red. Though I guess we had yellow ones too.”

“Red tomels... Does that not remind you of meat?”

“They would certainly make dishes look more colorful... Were they spicy?”

“No, no. Not at all. They taste pretty much exactly the same as the tomels here. Oh, another good example are black dicons. The ones in my world were white!”

And so we continued our conversation about otherworldly vegetables while heading down the road, our ultimate objective being law and order throughout the land.

It only took a few hours of airboard travel before we left the Liberation Army’s sphere of influence entirely, entering the areas where the cities and towns had yet to submit to the new Kingdom of Merinard.

But it wasn’t like we suddenly found ourselves in danger. Just because they had yet to submit didn’t mean they were necessarily our enemies. Long story short, there were still plenty of cities and towns that hadn’t chosen who to side with yet: the new Kingdom of Merinard or the Holy Kingdom.

I personally was of the opinion that it wouldn’t be very difficult to bring such cities and towns into Merinard’s sphere of influence. The Holy Kingdom was geographically far away, and we weren’t—if they ever needed military assistance, it would be much faster for us to send them help. On the flip side, if they chose to stand against us, we would be able to quickly send our armies out to subjugate them.

We’d already used our merchant network to spread word that the Liberation Army had defeated tens of thousands of the Holy Kingdom’s soldiers with a tiny strike team. It would take some time before we were able to spread those rumors outside of our borders, but at least within Merinard, it was safe to assume everyone had heard what happened.

And then on top of all that, the Liberation Army itself had been dispatched for this mission, accompanied by Adolist clergymen. We weren’t traveling with a massive military force, but we didn’t need to, given the rumors we’d spread about the small strike force that vanquished the Holy Kingdom’s army. It was a safe assumption for any city or town that their military force wouldn’t be able to defeat us.

“Or that *would* be the safe assumption, but...”

“They appear ready to resist to the bitter end,” Elen concluded.

I’d built a tough stone watchtower just out of range of their arrows and magic, which was where Elen and I were having a spot of tea while gazing over at the city. Amalie and Belta were sitting with us, looking toward the urban center with concern on their faces.

Three days had passed since we departed Merinesburg. Up until yesterday, every city and town we passed through expressed the desire to join the fold, but now we were finally up against resistors! Fighting was inevitable!

Which brought us to the city in front of us. They seemed to be well aware that we’d been going around and asking folks to peacefully submit to the new Kingdom of Merinard, which explained why their gates were shut tight and their drawbridge was up. They were ready to resist.

They’d initially seemed to be planning on luring us in with friendly gestures, then hitting us with a surprise attack to take advantage of our lack of numbers, but the harpy scouts we sent out spotted their scheme way ahead of time. We had one of the harpies hand-toss (foot-toss?) an inquiry from the sky about what their intentions were, and the second they read it, they quickly raised their bridge and closed themselves behind their walls.

“What point is there in trying to turn this into a siege battle?” I asked.

“I certainly do not know,” replied Elen. “I am not well versed in combat tactics, but siege battles are designed around the idea of waiting for reinforcements, are they not?”

“Not *just* that, but I’d say you’re pretty much on the mark... Sometimes, if you’re in possession of a powerful weapon, you can use the city walls as protection and annihilate your enemy from relative safety. Or if you have complete confidence in your defensive capabilities, you can force your attackers to give up by exhausting their resources.”

“I see. You certainly know a great deal about waging war.”

“Well, I am the Liberation Army’s defensive expert.”

The real answer was that I used to be a huge survival game fan, so I did all kinds of research on the web about different kinds of strongholds and

fortresses. That was where I picked up all this stuff on siege tactics and modern-day battle strategy. My expertise would pale in comparison to a real soldier's, but I still had more knowledge on the topic than your average joe.

"But then what do we do?" Amalie asked. "Are we going to fight them?"

"Well, I'm not sure we can avoid it at this point," I said. "I'd rather there not be any further death or bloodshed, but..."

Amalie once again turned her look of concern toward the city: Gleiseburg. "I see... I hope we can convince them to lay down their arms."

Gleiseburg, the city currently prepared to fight it out with us, was the main city of Merinard's northern region. It was a powerful fortress city with a splendid wall and a moat, and twenty years ago, during the war with the Holy Kingdom, it had managed to hold out against the invading army right up until Merinesburg fell.

There was something deeply ironic about the fact that it was now standing in opposition before us, the liberators who sought to drive the Holy Kingdom's forces out of the country.

"At first glance, the moat and wall seem like they'd be a problem, but they've got nothing on me, huh?" I mused.

All I had to do was build a roofed hallway made of stone all the way across the moat, get close to the wall, and then use my mithril pickaxe to open a hole in it. Then we could send in as many troops as we wanted. Hell, we could even tunnel beneath the moat and into the center of the city without them knowing.

"But I really wanna keep casualties to a minimum. Hrm..."

Though we were at the top of the watchtower peacefully enjoying our tea right now, Danan and Madame Zamil were talking with the others down below about how to best take Gleiseburg. Was it okay for us to be having tea at a time like this, instead of participating in the discussion? Well, apparently, they wanted to take the city without relying on my powers.

They had two rifle squads equipped with light machine guns, the harpy aerial bomb squad, and Danan's elite soldiers, all of whom were armed with powerful goat's foot crossbows. If they had the harpies drop bombs on the enemy after

showering arrows on them, they could wipe out the city's defensive forces without expending much effort.

"What would you do, Kousuke?"

"Me? Lemme see... I think I'd sneak into the city, then quietly steal all their weapons and food." I could easily fit an entire city's worth of food and weapons into my inventory. If I snuck in with a small team, we'd be able to pull it off, no sweat.

"They would indeed be unable to continue to hold out if they lost all their weapons and food."

Gleiseburg had raised its drawbridge and closed all of its gates in order to keep us out, so if they lost their food stocks, their supplies would dry up fast, and they'd be left with no choice but to surrender.

"But I am not a fan of how that would involve putting you in harm's way, Sir Kousuke," Belta added.

"Agreed," Elen said. "You shoulder the fates of many people, so I do not believe you should be acting with such recklessness."

"I guess not. Bleh..."

Both Belta and Elen drove the nail deep into the coffin, and even Amalie was looking at me with a concerned gaze. This really wasn't the time for me to try and be a hero.

If I were alone and the enemy spotted me, I could get away, no problem. In fact, during a battle in an urban environment, it would be close to impossible to catch me. If there were no rules imposed on me, I was confident I could even get away from Sylphy or Melty. The slime girls? Well, that'd be impossible.

"...Am I interrupting?"

As we discussed the matter, Madame Zamil poked her head out from the stairs like a lizard. The way I could only see the top half of her head, including her big round eyes, made her look quite cute. That might come off as rude, though, so I kept the thought to myself.

"You're fine!" I told her. "Have you guys decided on a strategy?"

“Yes. And we would like both yours and Lady Saint’s opinion as well.”

Woosh!

Madame Zamil’s head disappeared back down the stairs. Elen and I rose from our seats and started walking toward the conference room. Amalie and Belta decided to clean up, so we left them behind.

“Thank you for coming.”

Upon entering the room, we were greeted by the usual Liberation Army crew: an armor-clad Danan, Madame Zamil, Pirna, and Jagheera, who commanded the rifle squads.

“No problem. So, what’s the plan?”

“We came to the conclusion that we could easily take the city by force if we used our usual city siege strategy.”

“I figured.”

I nodded. We’d weaken them with long range attacks, pin them down to the wall, and then blow them away with aerial bombs. We could even blow up the gates, putting an end to the battle. There was only one problem.

“There’ll be way too many casualties.”

“Yeah.”

If we went this route, most of the people fighting would either die or suffer grievous injury. Our aerial bombs were nothing to scoff at; anyone who was directly hit by one would be blown to bits. Maybe it wasn’t my place to say this as one of the people doing the exploding, but we were trying to restore law and order to Merinard, not shed more blood.

“Which is why we’ve decided to rely on your powers, Kousuke.”

“I see... Wait, what?”

“We’d like you to prepare a strategy by which we can crush their morale without killing too many people,” Jagheera said. “However, we will turn down any plans that require sending you into enemy territory directly. You must have something, right? A weapon or two that could destroy their drawbridge and the

entrance into the city.”

“What do you think I am? Some blue cat robot or something? ...I mean, I might have what you’re looking for, but still.”

In fact, I had exactly what we needed for this kind of situation.

Since I knew that wars in this world were fought primarily with arrows and warhorses, I’d already gone out of my way to make a few weapons designed for siege battles. The only reason I hadn’t used them was that up until very recently, we were always on the defending side of battles like this. Plus, they couldn’t be transported without me around.

The weapon and the ammo were both stupidly heavy. The Liberation Army benefited from how mobile it could be, so there was never much of an opportunity to whip this thing out. Our goal was always to kill as many Holy Kingdom soldiers as possible, so bombing them and firing at them from afar suited our needs just fine.

“See? I told you he would have something!” Jagheera spat at Danan.

“I knew you’d be ready for such an occasion,” Pirna agreed. Both she and Jagheera were giving Danan critical looks. They must’ve both realized fairly quickly that with our current equipment, our only option was to slaughter the enemy until they submitted.

“...I do not think it is healthy to rely on Kousuke for so much,” Danan said bitterly.

“You’re absolutely right, but I don’t see the harm in this,” I said. “One of the objectives of this whole trip is to show off my power, after all.”

Plus, R&D was still developing muzzle-loading magic guns, and once those were done, the Liberation Army would have a weapon on par with this one. There was no reason to hold back here.

“All right, let’s go get this done,” I declared. “You just need me to destroy the wall and entrance, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then loan me a few soldiers. It won’t be long before we have similar

weapons available, so this'll be a good chance to give them some experience with it ahead of time."

"...Are you sure?" Danan asked.

I nodded. Danan was well aware that I was only sharing a small percentage of the weapons I'd developed with the Liberation Army. After all, he'd seen my entire inventory back when Cuvi set me up and kidnapped me.

"Prepare to feast your eyes upon the weapon from my world designed to make any massive wall obsolete!" I said, proceeding to descend the stairs of the tower.

What weapon am I referring to? You know which one! You can make it from iron and powder, and the shells don't even need to be explosive.

The fairly primitive one.

I was going to line up a bunch of them just outside of the enemy's bow range.

"Um, attention, remnants of the Holy Kingdom holding up within Gleiseburg. This is your final warning. Lay down your arms immediately and surrender, or we will destroy the city wall and take the city by force. We will not be able to guarantee your safety. However, if you surrender immediately, we will spare your lives and make sure you get back to your homeland safely. We also promise not to hold any of the garrisons serving under Holy Kingdom commanders accountable for their participation. I repeat, this is your last warning. Surrender immediately."

I was using the magic megaphone attached to my airboard to deliver our final warning to the enemy army holed up within Gleiseburg. I didn't have much hope that they'd actually heed my words, though, considering Danan and Elen already tried this tactic with them. My efforts would likely pan out the same way.

"Why are they being so stubborn about this?" I asked Elen next to me while we waited for their response.

"The bishop in this city is named Erwich, and even among his peers in the

main sect, he is said to be extremely cruel and merciless toward demi-humans,” Elen explained with a sigh. “I’m quite certain he refuses to even entertain the possibility of joining hands with us.”

Elen knew all too well that the current teachings of Adolism were a distorted version of the truth, so it wouldn’t have surprised me if she felt people like Erwich were pitiable in many ways. This man became what he was now because all he knew were those twisted teachings. Perhaps she was thinking that if he had encountered the real teachings of Adolism instead, this violent man could have turned out differently.

“I see... But I guess there’s nothing we can do about that now,” I said.

“...Correct.” Elen stared straight at the city wall; she was intent on burning this battle into her mind and heart.

“Unfortunately, it doesn’t look like they’re going to respond, so let’s get ready.”

I prepared a series of muzzle loaders with stands for this exact situation. Basically, this was a modern-day cannon of sorts. You stuffed powder into the muzzle, then a shell, then lit a fuse to detonate the whole thing. This resulted in the cannon firing off its iron shell far into the distance.

At the center of the wheeled stands were jet-black cast-iron cannons. Metal cases housing shells and powder bags were attached to either side of the weapon. For this particular occasion, I’d prepared ten cannons in total. A single one of these needed four people to operate it, so I ended up borrowing forty of Danan’s men.

To start things off, I chose four people from the group and lectured them on how to use this new weapon. Obviously, I had everyone else watch so that they could pick up the process as well.

“This thing is called a cannon,” I explained. “It fires iron shells at superfast speeds, which means it can hit targets well out of reach of arrows. Think of it like a kind of flying battering ram. It’s not capable of precise aim, but it’s really useful for taking down stationary targets like huge walls and castle gates.”

I smacked the black cannon with my hand.

“With this thing, we’ll be able to destroy their wall without fear of a counterattack, and we’ll be able to riddle the front gate with holes. Once we’ve done that, taking the city will be easy as pie.”

The elites of the Liberation Army looked at me with great interest as I started to explain how to use the cannons.

“First, you have to clean the inside of the cannon. If you skip this part of the process, the shell might not fire properly, and it could end up exploding within the barrel itself. I don’t need to tell you what’ll happen after that, right? Do not slack on this if you value your lives.”

The soldiers nodded seriously.

“Oh, crap. I almost forgot. There’s one thing you have to do before that: Make sure that one person uses their thumb to press down on the ignition entrance right here. This is a safety measure, okay? You can prevent refuse and the like from getting in this way and keep it from being accidentally loaded too. Just to be safe, I need you guys to do this even when the cannons aren’t loaded, and even if you’re not planning on actually firing them. One thing to keep in mind is that it gets superhot after multiple shots, so make sure to have gloves on hand.”

I had one of the four soldiers immediately put their thumb down.

“Okay, so like I said a second ago, the first step in all of this is the cleaning process. You use this spiral pole to scrape off the gunk and cinders left over in the barrel of the cannon. After that, you use this sponge to wipe it all down. Keep in mind that powder is easily ruined by moisture, so make sure not to get the barrel too wet. You only need to use a little bit of water on the sponge,” I said as I jammed the stick with a spiral shaped talon on it into the barrel, then scratched off the muck inside.

Next, I took the sponge stick and the bucket of water I’d prepared beforehand and began to wipe down the inside of the barrel. I made two of the soldiers copy what I did afterward.

“Once you finish cleaning the barrel, next you have to load the cannon. First, you take a bag of powder from this case and stuff it into the barrel. Use the hard end of the sponge stick to push it all the way into the back. This part here

is called a ramrod.”

I slipped a bag of powder into the cannon, then took the sponge stick from one of the soldiers and used the ramrod to jam the bag all the way into the back.

“Next, you take a shell from this case and put it into the barrel. Just like with the bag, you use the ramrod to push it all the way into the back. Once you do that, the cannon is loaded, so the next step is to prepare to fire. Anyone on cleaning duty needs to make sure they avoid being on the side of the muzzle. This thing is insanely loud when it fires, so don’t forget to cover your ears.”

I gave the sponge back to one of the soldiers before walking over to the man holding down the ignition entrance with his thumb.

“Okay, so first you need to take this cone and jam it into the entrance, then open a hole in the paper power cartridge. Pour the priming powder into the cone and down into the entrance. There, all done.”

I tore off a corner of the powder’s paper cartridge and poured it into the cannon. Each one had enough powder for a single shot.

“Next, you take this fuse connected to this fire pole and jam it into the ignition entrance. Kaboom! One superfast cannon round, fresh off the grill. C’mon, let’s send them a little hello! Cover your ears!”

The cannon’s sights were already set on Gleiseburg’s wall. I took the fuse and stuck it into the ignition entrance.

KABOOM!

The explosion sounded like thunder, or perhaps even a giant monster’s roar. White smoke bellowed into the air, and we heard screams of horror and angry shouting coming from Gleiseburg.

I waved some of the smoke away and looked over at my target: I could see that part of their wall was damaged. Ten more shots, give or take, and that thing would be doomed.

“As you can see, these things are very powerful. You adjust your aim, clean the barrel, load it, and then fire. All you have to do is repeat that process, got

it? Hold down the ignition entrance, scratch off the muck with the talon, clean the barrel with a sponge, load the powder, load the shell, open a hole in the paper powder bag, ready the priming powder, then fire on command. After that, you start the whole process over again. I'll be issuing the commands this time, so all you have to do is follow my lead."

Nobody had any questions, so I had them take their positions.

"Let's get this show on the road! Our target is Gleiseburg's wall! Take aim!"

The elite soldiers moved the cannons and faced them toward the wall.

"Thumbs on the ignition entrances! Scrape the barrels!"

The soldiers took the spiral sticks and jammed them into the barrels, scraping off the muck inside. Of course, these cannons were pretty much brand-new, so they were already clean.

"Sponge time!"

Next, they dipped the sponges into the buckets of water and wiped down the internals of the barrels.

"Begin loading the cannon! Insert the powder bag!"

The elites grabbed bags from the cases and used the ramrods to stuff them deep into the backs of the barrels.

"Load the shells!"

Next, they took the iron shells and repeated the process. The cannons were now loaded.

"Prepare to fire! Open a hole in the paper cartridge and pour in the priming powder!"

The elites holding down the ignition entrances took their cones, stuffed them in, opened up the paper cartridges, and poured in the priming powder. Perfect.

"Cover your ears! Ready, aim...fire!"

KakakakabOOM!

The blasts overlapped with one another, filling the entire area with white smoke. I overheard someone coughing nearby.

Maybe I should make them masks...

A beat later, we heard more screaming coming from Gleiseburg. Once the smoke cleared, we could clearly see that a good portion of the wall was smashed to pieces after taking ten cannon shots. It wasn't quite ready to collapse just yet, but we'd done real damage to it.

"All right! Looking good, people. Take aim! Hold down the ignition entrance! Begin cleaning! Start with the talons!"

Having seen the results of their actions, the soldiers let out battle cries as they began to reload the cannons.

I wonder how many shots it'll take to bring that wall down?

I internally clicked my tongue from atop the city wall as I stared over at the black-haired man delivering us his final warning.

I would have surrendered if that were at all possible.

But now that my wife, my children, and the rest of my kin had been taken hostage, there was nothing I could do. This garrison was composed entirely of soldiers who were born here in Gleiseburg, and there wasn't a single one of us who had any true loyalty toward the Holy Kingdom or to Adolism.

When I was still just a child, they burst into Gleiseburg like they owned the place. They hurt my childhood friend just for being a demi-human. They hurt the older boys and girls from the neighborhood who used to play with me. They hurt the older men and women. They said that because I involved myself with demi-humans, I was a sinful barbarian, and looked down on me for it. Those assholes could go to hell for all I cared.

But who exactly was that man? He didn't look all that strong, but it seemed to me like the Liberation Army soldiers were listening to every word he said. Was he of high station despite his appearance? It struck me as odd that a human could have such a spot in an army composed of demi-humans... And what were they up to, anyway? They were futzing around with some sort of black metal tube.

Just as I tilted my head in confusion, white smoke erupted from said object, and a massive boom filled the air. A moment later, the wall shook. What the hell happened?!

“Wh-what’s going on?! Report!” the Holy Kingdom knight yelled pompously.

It wasn’t long before one of the soldiers belonging to the garrison stationed on the opposite side of the city gate rushed over to deliver his report.

“The wall has been damaged?! How could they have done that from so far away and without magic?!”

It certainly looked like they didn’t use magic, but I simply assumed their black tube was some sort of magic tool. I didn’t expect the knight to get so bent out of shape from a single shot...

Wait, they’ve got ten of those things lined up! What’s going to happen to us if they fire them all at once?

“Whew, Gleiseburg’s wall sure was impressive.”

After the fifth round of cannon fire, part of the wall began to collapse. Another four rounds later and the rest of the wall began to crumble in on itself. After that, we showered the area around the front gate with cannon fire, eventually destroying it and the two circular towers stationed to their left and right.

Needless to say, we were completely out of their attack range, so this was an entirely one-sided affair, leaving us with zero casualties. I couldn’t say how many men were lost on their end, but I did make it a point to tell them to move away from the gate and wall over the megaphone, so hopefully more people were saved than not.

“That was incredible. So this is the extent of your power...” Elen whispered while holding her white handkerchief up to her mouth.

Amalie and Belta were on standby in the watchtower, so they probably got a better view of the cannon’s immense firepower. Down here, our view was limited by dust and smoke.

“Kousuke,” Danan said. “I would like to lead the men into the city.”

“Got it. Protect me while I set up a bridge.”

I stuffed the cannons back into my inventory and made way for the moat while Madame Zamil and Danan’s elite soldiers guarded me. Once I arrived, I placed down some stone blocks and built a bridge over the moat.

“We shall now proceed to storm the city. Do not lay a single finger on any unarmed civilians. And this goes without saying, but: No pillaging either. Understood?”

“Yes, sir!” they responded in unison.

“Good. Anyone who operated cannons is in charge of guarding the people in the rear. Got it?”

“Roger!”

The forty individuals I had on cannon duty were going to protect me, Elen, and the others on standby in the rear, as well as the civil servants and clergymen. Even though they covered their ears, being subjected to so many consecutive blasts of sound had messed up their sense of equilibrium. That kind of thing was the difference between life and death in a free-for-all.

We watched on as the elite soldiers stormed Gleiseburg, all clad in the same kind of armor.

I was hopeful that the enemy would lose their drive to fight after seeing their wall and gate destroyed so handily. We had a bunch of clergymen on our side, so as long as no one suffered any fatal wounds, we’d be able to fix them up.

I crossed my fingers, hoping they’d hurry up and lay down their arms.

Those hopes were not answered.

“So he’s holed up in the lord’s manor, huh?”

“Yes. Additionally, he has taken some of the soldiers’ families hostage. Both Holy Kingdom soldiers and those belonging to the city’s garrisons.”

This was all the handiwork of Erwich, the man who rejected coexistence with

demi-humans at all costs. He had two options for us: Either our forces retreated immediately, or we let him and his cohorts escape.

The problem was that he was holed up with people we needed to rescue, so we couldn't just bomb the building like we did with the wall. Oh, and for the record, the manor was more like a fortress in its construction. It wasn't enclosed by a moat, but based on its stone build, it was clearly not going to go down easily, and its wood gate was reinforced by iron of some kind. We weren't getting through there with a simple wooden battering ram.

Erwich had graced us with his presence earlier, giving a positively wonderful speech from atop the roof of the manor. Unfortunately, Elen and I had arrived at the manor after Danan and his elite soldiers took over most of Gleiseburg, so we weren't present for it.

"He just went on and on about how demi-humans are envoys of depravity, and how we're natural born sinners," Pirna explained off to my side, opposite of where Elen was. "Y'know, the works."

She shrugged her shoulders as if to say this was all such a pain. But I was distracted watching her wings. It was incredible how flexible they were; Pirna was able to move them like normal arms.

I wonder what their bone structure is like.

"...So, what do we do?" I wondered. "I guess we just take the place by force, huh?"

"Is that possible?"

"We've got options. We can open a hole in the wall, dig underground... The problem is that if we wait too long, he's just gonna run away. I'm sure this place must have a secret escape tunnel or two."

"You mean one leading outside? I cannot say for certain, but that is not the sort of thing a standard manor in a city would possess," Madame Zamil interjected, putting an end to that thought.

Huh. I guess if he did have something like that, he probably wouldn't have asked us to retreat or let him go. Though it's possible that was just a red herring.

“Let’s make this quick, then,” I declared. “We’re going in, so tell Danan to get a team together. Elen, Madame Zamil, I need the two of you to get the garrison prisoners to tell us about the layout of the manor.”

I told a nearby soldier to deliver my message to Danan, then took Elen and Madame Zamil to where we’d been holding the prisoners we took when we first attacked the city.

Apparently, many of them were being forced to follow Erwich’s orders after he took their loved ones hostage. What he hadn’t considered was that his relationships with these soldiers would take a turn for the worse even if he somehow made it out of this situation in one piece. Considering how fanatic a bishop Erwich was, he probably preferred this path over bending the knee to demi-humans.

The prisoners were only lightly bound, though we did take their weapons away. We managed to get info about the manor from them, so Danan and I looked into where the best entry point would be. There were those who pleaded that we stop after they heard we intended on entering the manor to capture Erwich, but we managed to convince them it’d be all right and even got some intel out of them.

Additionally, we asked if there were any Erwich faithful among the garrison and Holy Kingdom soldiers we were holding prisoner in the hopes we could get more detailed information from them, but unfortunately, they’d all died when we stormed the city.

“The hostages are either being held in the dungeon or a second-floor room near the stairs to the roof. Hrm...”

“Either way, we need only focus on taking the manor down quickly,” Danan said. “As long as the hostages do not die, we can heal them later, no?”

He wasn’t wrong, but I couldn’t help but feel we should prioritize their safety. I was told that regardless of my concerns, we needed to act fast. At this rate, the bishop might lose his temper, leading to hostage deaths.

“Then I shall create a diversion,” Elen said.

“Just be careful, okay?” I asked her.

“That is my line. Kousuke, please take care. Unlike the cathedral in Merinesburg, this is not a sanctuary. If you get hit with something like basilisk poison again, there will be no saving you. Do not push yourself too hard.”

“Right. I’ll be careful.”

In my attempt to express my concern for Elen, I ended up making her more worried about me. In the end, she was going to use her position as the saint to engage in a battle of words with Erwich, all while being protected by Danan’s elite soldiers. In that sense, she was perfectly safe. Meanwhile, I was going in with the squad storming the manor, which meant I was going to be on-site for any and all combat, putting me in much more danger than her.

For this particular occasion, I was going with a close-range submachine gun. It was the same gun I’d used back when we were exploring the ruins. This thing used .45mm pistol ammunition, and it even had a suppressor. It was a fairly old model, but it was easy to manufacture and dependable, making it a personal favorite of mine.

To be completely honest, I would have loved to use something more modern, but making that kind of weapon required very specific materials. But in the future, I was going to be able to get slime materials from Lime and the others, which would enable me to craft polymer stuff. Once that happened, everything would change.

I wanted to innovate on my processing tech, but I had no idea how to advance beyond the golem processing workbenches I had. It was beginning to feel as though I’d need to do something pretty drastic to expand my options.

As I performed a thorough check of my equipment, Danan finished putting together a team to go into the manor, prompting Elen to approach the front of the manor with her bodyguards. She started calling for Erwich.

At the same time, me, Danan, Madame Zamil, and a small group of elite soldiers moved to a wall near the entrance of the dungeon. Pirna and the other harpies were flying at a low altitude to keep the eyes on the roof busy.

Here was the plan:

First, Elen and the harpies would provide diversions from their respective

positions, keeping the enemy's eyes on them. Meanwhile, our unit would sneak close to the manor, giving me the chance to use my mithril pickaxe to quickly destroy the wall and gain entrance into the building. From there, we'd enter the dungeon and quickly save the hostages. We would then proceed to question the jailer and find out if there were hostages being held elsewhere, and if there were, we'd save them. Once that was finished, we would signal for the rear squad to enter after us, as our team went ahead to get Erwich. Then, once we met up with the rear squad, we'd take control of the manor.

"With me around, physical walls really are meaningless."

"You are pretty much a nightmare to any and all defense commanders."

The only way to render me powerless was to kill me or put me to sleep with drugs. No matter what you did to restrain me, I could easily put my restraints into my inventory. Ah, well, I guess you could cut my arms and legs off or bury me in walls I couldn't store. At that point, I'd be done for. To be honest, just imagining those possibilities was terrifying.

"This is it."

"Understood. Let's get ready to enter."

Once we arrived at our destination, I summoned my mithril pickaxe from my shortcut and tapped the tip of it on the manor wall. This gentle sound was accompanied by a section of the wall—one meter wide, one meter tall, and one meter deep—vanishing. Obviously, the wall wasn't actually one meter deep, which meant we'd broken through to the other side.

We were in.

"I'm going to make the hole bigger."

I swung my mithril pickaxe some more, opening the hole up wider, then stuffed any shelves and barrels that were in the way into my inventory. This looked like some kind of storage room of sorts. I called my submachine gun from my shortcut, then stepped into the building.

Madame Zamil went first, and I followed after her. Danan had been against this plan initially, but since Madame Zamil was more than aware of how powerful and useful my weapons could be, she had my back. Equipped with her

mithril alloy short spear, she descended down the stairs to the dungeon, stopping and peering around the corner.

“Three people,” she reported.

“Should we take care of them all?” I asked.

“I will handle the two closest to us. You take care of the one in the back.”

“Got it. Be careful not to enter my line of fire.”

Madame Zamil nodded, then proceeded to turn the corner and leap out at the men. I quickly followed after her.

“Wha?!”

Madame Zamil smashed the grip of her short spear into the side of the confused jailer, causing him to collapse on the floor. She then used her powerful tail to swipe out the legs of the other man. I watched on while carefully aiming my submachine gun at the jailer further in. Specifically, his right shoulder.

Da da da da!

The high pitched shrill of my weapon filled the room as its subsonic lead bullets smashed into the area around the man’s shoulder. The .45mm bullets pierced his leather armor and entered his body with barely any resistance.

“Gah?!”

The man collapsed onto his back. One of the bullets missed and hit the stone wall behind him, causing a chunk of the wall to collapse to the floor. The loud sound this made was accompanied by the sound of brass bullet cases hitting the ground as well.

I watched as Madame Zamil stomped on the jailer she’d tripped, then got her attention and nodded to the man I shot. “Take care of him.”

If I wanted to kill him, I could have just shot him some more, but I didn’t possess the talents required to suppress a strong man in a nonfatal fashion. That was for the pros.

I left Danan to deal with the jailers and decided to handle the hostages

myself. They looked terrified at the sight of Madame Zamil.

“We’re with the new Kingdom of Merinard,” I told them. “In other words, the Liberation Army. We’ve come to take control of this city. But that doesn’t mean we plan on doing anything awful to you guys. If anything, we’re here to save you.”

The hostages remained scared and confused. I guess it was pretty weird having someone show up and say they were taking control of your city but also saving you!

All of the hostages were female. They spanned a wide range of ages, from children to the elderly. The one thing that was consistent was that they were all connected to garrison and Holy Kingdom soldiers.

“In any case,” I added, “I just need you ladies to understand we’re not here to hurt you. Are you hungry? Parched? Is anyone feeling unwell?”

After asking around, a few people stepped forward to say they were feeling sick, so I gave them potions. Since they seemed a bit concerned, I made a point of taking a sip in front of them before handing the potions over. This meant there was less for them to drink, but as long as they weren’t suffering from some sort of fatal ailment, that amount of potion would work just fine.

We spoke with the jailers and hostages and managed to confirm that this was everyone. It would’ve been a huge pain in the ass if Erwich split them up, so this was a nice stroke of luck.

“We’ve acquired the hostages,” I reported over the golem communicator. “Rear squad, you’re clear to enter.”

“Roger that. Rear squad, entering the manor now.”

With that taken care of, we left the dungeon. When we met up with the rear squad in front of the storage room, our true mission would begin. We had the advantage in terms of both quality and numbers, so I didn’t anticipate any trouble ahead.

Our sweep of the manor went smoothly. Our enemies were soldiers of the

Holy Kingdom, but they were still only human. We had demi-humans with incredible physical abilities on our side, plus they were elites. It was simply a matter of fact that demi-humans were superior to humans in close-range combat. Also, our equipment was well beyond theirs, adding another layer of superiority.

“So now he’s holed up in his office, huh?”

“That appears to be the case.”

The demi-human squad was currently ramming the office door as Danan and I watched. With the outlook grim, Erwich saw fit to shut himself in the room. This bastard wasn’t going to make things easy for us, which made it hard to resist the urge to tell him to just give it up.

“This is a pain in the ass,” I decided. “I’m breaking down the wall.”

“Much obliged,” said Danan. “Prepare for entry!”

I used my shortcut to summon my silver-shining mithril pickaxe while our men began to load their goat’s foot crossbows. They were going to fire into the room as soon as I destroyed the wall.

“Let’s do this.”

I signaled to the men with my eyes, then swung my pickaxe down on the wall to the side of the door.

Tink!

The stone wall vanished, revealing a nervous-looking man in robes that made him look like a cliched clergyman. Astonishment filled his face as he was surrounded by a number of soldiers.

“Take care of them!” Danan ordered, and his men fired their arrows into the enemies’ shoulders, arms, and legs.

The crossbow-equipped soldiers stepped back amid their foes screams of agony, allowing for another group of soldiers to enter the room and suppress the injured men.

“You cursed sinners... You will not be forgiven for what you’ve done to a bishop of the church!” Erwich hissed, a venomous look on his face. There was a

bolt sticking out of his shoulder as demi-humans restrained him on both sides.

“Tch, forgiven for what?” I scoffed. “You’re a real pain in the ass, you know that?”

I wasn’t even trying to hide my disdain for the man. If he’d just laid down his arms at the very start of all of this, we could have comfortably sent him back to the Holy Kingdom. But instead, he imprisoned innocent people and resisted. There was no way the new Kingdom of Merinard could just let him go without punishment now. Just thinking about it all gave me a headache.

“You wretch... You side with these dirty demi-humans even though you are a human?!”

“Ugh, just shut up. Your entire demi-human prejudice only exists because remnants of the Kingdom of Omitt snuck into the church and warped its teachings. You’re just being manipulated by ghosts of the past.”

“You believe the Nostalgia-sect’s nonsense? Heretical garbage!” Erwich spat out, his face contorted with pain from the bolt in his shoulder.

“Unfortunately for you, there’s not a single passage about excluding demi-humans in the Kingdom of Omitt era Adolism scripture we found,” I told him. “It’s clear as day that the teachings were changed after the fall of Omitt, little Erwich.”

“Foolishness.” Erwich’s face was distorted with hatred. “I will not listen to a word of your trash.”

This was the type of guy you just wanted to smack in the face with evidence, but you knew it wouldn’t change his way of thinking. It was a waste of time.

“I agree that this is all foolishness,” I said. “There’s no point talking to a third-rate jackass villain like you. Take him away.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Third-rate...? You dare call me third-rate?! You bastard!” He looked furious, but I didn’t give a damn. “I won’t forget your face! I swear to God that one day I will see you punished! I swear it!”

“Yeah, yeah. Sorry, but I’ve already forgotten what you look like.”

Since people seemed to think I was a disciple of God, whether I'd be "punished" was kind of up in the air, but he was free to think whatever he wanted. I personally felt it was more likely his luck would run out before that could happen.

Once the manor was ours, it was no time at all until we had Gleiseburg entirely under our control. We'd arrested the guy at the top who refused to surrender, as well as his closest men. We even rescued all the hostages, so the people in the city were cooperative.

Unfortunately, among the hostages we saved was a woman who'd lost her family in our initial cannon attack. This hurt my heart, but she didn't blame us, even though her face was filled with deep sadness. I left people like her to the clergymen. That kind of thing was too heavy for me to shoulder alone. All I could really do was give the clergymen some huge pieces of valuable ore and tell them to use that to fund any kind of care they needed to provide women like her. Money couldn't heal wounds of the heart; I wasn't sure whether that was really the case, but it wasn't for me to decide. I was content if the money could be used to help them live in peace.

"You look distressed."

After finishing the repairs on the city wall and the manor, I found myself sitting in the manor's common room, spacing out as I lost myself in thought. Before I even realized it, Amalie was sitting next to me, a caring look on her face.

"Well, there's just a lot to think about after a battle like that," I said.

I was prepared to go to the depths of hell with Sylphy, but being faced with someone filled with grief over losing their family, I couldn't help but stop and think. In the end, I came to the conclusion that I had to keep moving forward, but that didn't make me feel any better.

It wasn't as though I wanted to be so wishy-washy, but it was just a part of who I was. If I could just look at this whole world as some sort of big game, and all of its inhabitants as NPCs or something, I could've been spared this kind of mental strife. But I couldn't. I didn't have it in me to do that.

“Would it not be best if you did not force yourself to stand on the front lines of battle?” Amalie asked.

“Sure, but I don’t feel great about making weapons for killing and just turning away from what that actually means. Plus, my powers are useful on the front lines.”

Especially in situations like this, where our enemy took a defensive position and holed themselves up. Though I supposed I could’ve just accompanied the attack squad as a tool for opening up walls...

In all reality, if we were content with just killing Erwich and the rest of the soldiers, it would’ve been faster for me to have gone in alone. I could destroy the wall myself, kill everyone with my submachine gun, and be back in time for dinner. If I left the cleanup to Danan, we could have made short work of the enemy forces stationed here.

But that didn’t feel right.

“I guess in the end, I’m not cool with leaving everything to others, and I’m not down with just doing everything myself either. I’m a member of the Liberation Army, after all.”

“I see you have a strong sense of responsibility, Sir Kousuke. But remember, you are but a single person. Regardless of whether you are the Fabled Visitor or the disciple of God. You are you, and there is a limit to what those of us who are not God can do. Please do not shoulder too many burdens.”

“Ah... I’ll try my best. If things get too rough, I’ll make sure to lean on someone.”

It was fairly common in anime, manga, and literature for protagonists to take on too many responsibilities, leading to dramatic failure. With that in mind, I needed to take Amalie’s words to heart.

“Yes, that would be wise. In fact, how about leaning on me?” Amalie spread her arms wide, smiling warmly.

Wait, this was where this conversation was going? How pragmatic of her.

“In that case, don’t mind if I do.” I didn’t hesitate to rest my head on her soft-

looking thighs.

I'd learned something important from watching Erwich: There was no point in trying to flee from something you couldn't escape from. If resisting wasn't an option, it made more sense to accept reality as it was. That way, both you and your partner could avoid unnecessary hardship.

I was traveling with Amalie, Belta, and Elen on this tour of the country, and everyone knew what that meant. In other words, it was expected that I would deepen my bonds with them "in that way." Of course, if I *really* wanted to resist, I could, but there was nothing anyone had to gain from that. Nobody would end up happy.

And anyway, Archbishop Deckard, the leader of the Nostalgia-sect of Adolism, and Sylphy, the de facto leader of the new Kingdom of Merinard, were both using me to try to deepen the bonds between our two groups. They both understood and felt that I needed to deepen my bonds with Elen and the others in order for our parties to grow closer.



In that case, there was only one thing I needed to do: accept the situation and give myself over to it so that we could join hands. If that meant everyone, including myself, could find happiness, then that was fine with me.

“...I am a bit surprised,” Amalie said as she started gently caressing my head, her cheeks bright red. “It did not seem to me like you were very enthusiastic about...this.”

“I’d be lying if I said it wasn’t a lot to think about,” I admitted, “but it’s not as though I don’t like you or Belta... If anything, I’m more concerned with how the two of you feel.”

Archbishop Deckard was basically forcing them into a relationship with me. Amalie seemed to get what I was asking, and with her cheeks still red, nodded.

“I believe I mentioned this before, but I feel quite comfortable around you, even though you are a man. Besides, if I’m with you, I will be able to stay by Lady Eleonora’s side. And...”

“And...?”

“Um, I happened to get a good look at you before, when, um, I took care of you,” she said, averting her gaze from me and fidgeting.

Aaaah, that flustered look of hers is wonderful. I see, I see.

“Would you like to touch my arms? Anywhere else?”

“I-I could not possibly...” she said, despite taking her hands from my head and making motions like she was dying to touch me. Amalie gave off a reserved aura, but maybe she was actually secretly super lewd.

“Come on, don’t be shy.” I closed my eyes for her, since I figured it’d be awkward for her otherwise.

“Th-then, here goes...”

Amalie began to timidly brush her hand over my chest, my sides, and my stomach.

Heh, heh, heh. I’ve been flying and running around nonstop since coming here, so I’ve put on some muscle. I even have abs now. Behold, my beautiful

musculature—agh! Not my sides! That tickles! That tiiickles!

Messing around with Amalie helped me get out of my funk.

What's that? Were we getting up to lewd stuff?

Generally speaking, not really. All she did was feel me up, which tickled a whole bunch. Eventually she snapped back to her senses, turned bright red, apologized repeatedly, then fled the room.

Because she grew up among women, I got the sense that Amalie's sexual disposition was a bit... Actually, I decided not to think about that too much. Better not to confuse anyone with my conjecture. I decided to simply keep an eye on things for the time being.

If anything, I was probably the one who warped her sexual disposition. It was all the fault of that damn bastard who stabbed me with a poisoned short sword.

"We're going to have to spend at least three to seven days in Gleiseburg if we want to hold control over it," Danan said seriously. "We will be conducting recon in the surrounding area and taking care of any monsters and bandits we find, so I want the civil servants to get a handle on the government here, and the clergymen to do what they do best."

He looked around at the people gathered in the meeting room.

Among those present were Danan himself; Pirna; the two captains of the rifle squad; a winged civil servant who was in charge of the other civil servants; and Elen, Amalie, Belta, and a male priest whose name I didn't know, representing the church. Including myself, there were a total of ten people in the room.

Amalie was keeping herself together, but every time we met eyes, she turned bright red and looked away. Elen was behind her, so she hadn't noticed any of this, but Belta was standing off to Amalie's side and definitely picked up on what was happening. She was casting the both of us a suspicious look. I didn't want her to get too curious, so I decided to ignore her.

...But maybe it was already too late for that.

"Fortunately, most of the garrison and Holy Kingdom soldiers are being

cooperative. Erwich doesn't appear to have many loyalists. That being said, I am concerned over how many of the citizens feel the same way as him."

"What is the plan of action on that end?" asked the winged officer, his expression as serious as Danan's.

His brown wings had a choppy pattern to them, and he had apparently been forced to work as a slave at a business in Arichburg. Despite his position at the time, he was deeply involved with working the books and running the company for his former human master.

"Nothing," Danan replied. "If they have been abusing slaves, we will deal with them in accordance with the law. If they reject the teachings of the main sect, then is it not the clergymen's job to spread the proper teachings?"

"That is correct," Elen replied with a nod.

"Those who cling to the old ways after their slaves are freed will eventually leave the city on their own once they realize that the people around them do not share their views. As long as they don't start trouble, I do not think we will have to make any moves directly."

"Understood," said the civil servant. "We will have to keep an eye on the situation, then. What should we do about the former slaves?"

"We will be taking care of their daily necessities until they are able to regain their strength," said Danan. "After that, I believe we should act in accordance with their will. Please handle that properly. We've received permission from Her Majesty and the chancellor to use Kousuke as we see fit, so do not hesitate to throw work his way."

"I'm at your service," I chimed in.

He must have been referring to Sylphy and Melty when he said, "Her Majesty" and "chancellor." The cool thing about having two immensely strong individuals at the top of the food chain was that we didn't have to worry about them getting assassinated. Hah hah hah.

"What about funding?"

"Her Majesty has left money with Kousuke, isn't that right?"

“Yup, and I’ve got plenty.”

Sylphy had given me a pretty sizable chunk of change for this trip—even if most of that came from the gems and ingots I dug up, plus the money earned from selling the crops I harvested. If we used up all the currency she gave me, all I had to do was go find some big rocks, hit them a few times, and collect the gems, mithril, gold, and silver that came out of them. We had no reason to be concerned over cash.

“Put it this way,” I said. “You really don’t have to worry too much about how much money you use. Ask me for whatever you need.”

“Understood. Thank you very much,” the winged officer said, bowing his head.

“Members of the clergy, feel free to use Kousuke as you see fit as well. The same goes for funding and goods.”

“Right. Though I was intending to do that from the start.”

“I’m yours for the taking.”

I submitted without a fight. If this meant that there’d be more people who could live in peace or find true happiness, who was I to complain? At the end of the day, I was basically doing the same stuff I did in Arichburg and Merinesburg. In fact, because this place was so much smaller, this would be an easier job in comparison.

“Since Kousuke has already repaired the manor and the city wall, please get to work starting tomorrow,” said Danan. “I assume he will be working with you all, for the most part?”

“Yes,” said Elen. “We will be conducting charity for the injured and sickly, so it would be of great help if he is here with us.”

“I see. In that case, would you mind giving me the money now?” asked the winged officer.

“Of course. If you’re going to be within the manor, I doubt you have anything to worry about, but just to be sure, keep the money somewhere safe.”

“I will.”

Danan gave me a signal with his eyes, so I pulled out three wooden boxes of gold and three wooden boxes of silver pieces, then put them on top of the table in the room. Each box had a thousand pieces in it. Currency value was different here, so I couldn't say for sure, but one silver piece was about 10,000 yen, and one small gold piece was something like 100,000 yen.

“...The small gold pieces are more than enough.”

“Are you sure?”

The man with the wings looked at me like I was an idiot for even asking. Three boxes, each worth about 100,000,000 yen, and three boxes each worth about 10,000,000 yen, combined for a total of 330,000,000 yen...

Okay, yeah. I'm not so sure I'd be able to sleep peacefully with a box of silver pieces on my person.

My senses were numb because once I put stuff into my inventory, there was no danger of it ever being stolen, but if I had to be responsible for 330,000,000 yen in my hotel room, I'd refuse in a heartbeat. Suddenly I found myself rather terrified of my powers. A bit late for that, huh?

“Oh, and Kousuke?” Danan said. “We cleared the room next door so you can use it for you-know-what. Set it up later, okay?”

“Got it.”

He was talking about the large golem communicator. I was going to be setting one up here so that we could get in touch with Merinesburg quickly in the event of an emergency, plus confirm our steps moving forward and make reports. This device was one of the Liberation Army's most important secrets, so security around it was handled strictly.

The members of the Nostalgia-sect already knew about the small communicators—hell, they'd seen them with their own eyes—but even Elen hadn't seen a large golem communicator yet, as far as I was aware. Back when we were broadcasting comms between Arichburg and Merinesburg, we were going through Lime and the others, after all.

“Kolnes, use the funds as you see fit.”

The winged civil officer nodded earnestly. “Thank you. I will.” So his name was Kolnes, eh?

“Then that’s all. Everyone get some rest ahead of tomorrow.”

Everyone rose from their respective seats.

Unfortunately, I wasn’t getting any rest just yet—I had to build the barracks for our soldiers first.

Chapter 5:

Holy Companions

I WORKED MY ASS OFF that day. Long distance driving, storming a city, taking over an enemy stronghold, fixing the manor and city walls, then healing the injured. After our meeting, I ended up destroying the old barracks in the city and rebuilding them... I even distributed several days' worth of supplies.

When I list it like that, I come off as quite the hard worker, huh?

Anyhow, I finally made my way back to the manor and proceeded down the hallway toward my assigned room. The sun was setting, casting a crimson light into the hall.

Which was where I ran into Belta, holding a basket of freshly baked bread. Was she preparing for dinner?

"Good evening, Sir Kousuke."

"Good evening."

Belta was a beautiful woman with finely chiseled facial features and a distinct strength of character in her eyes. I wasn't sure whether this was okay to say out loud or not, but she had an alluring intensity about her.

"Did something happen with Amalie?" she asked.

"N-not that I'm a-aware of." I tried to hide how shaken I was, but I ended up stumbling over my words from the suddenness of her question.

Belta's eyes were glued to me. "Could you say the same thing in front of Lady Eleonora?"

"I would simply remain silent in order to preserve Amalie's honor."

Hah! She can't see through my lies if I don't say anything at all! Heh, heh. I'm a genius.

"Is that so? By the way, I possess skills as an inquisitor that allow me to aid Lady Eleonora in her work."

“I-inquisitor?”

“Yes. Lady Eleonora’s eyes allow her to see through lies, but if her target remains silent, they can get around that, which is why she needs someone by her side who has the skills to make them talk. I also serve as her bodyguard, by the way.”

“Right, right...”

So that was why Belta had such a powerful aura. Now that I thought about it, it dawned on me that she was always following Elen, as if she were her shadow.

“I am currently debating whether or not I should use such inquisitorial skills on you.”

“I haven’t d-d-done anything shady or w-weird.”

“Really?” The highlights in Belta’s eyes disappeared as her questioning continued.

She’s terrifying!

“I lay down in her lap,” I confessed.

“Is that all?”

“She also gently massaged my arms and stomach.” I wasn’t lying...even if I left out the part where Amalie’s breathing got very heavy, and her touching got a bit sensual.

“...That is fine, I suppose,” Belta conceded. “It does not seem as though you did anything especially inexcusable.”

“If anything, she did that sort of stuff to me.”

“That would explain why she is acting that way. Well, Amalie did grow up rather sheltered,” she said, as if to imply *she* was different.

Noticing my gaze, Belta pouted slightly.

Honestly, when a beautiful woman with such a powerful aura made a face like that, she only became that much more devastating. It made her seem extra adorable.

“I am not as sheltered as her,” she said. “When I was trained as an inquisitor, I

came face-to-face with many things, not to mention all that I was exposed to when I began conducting interrogations myself.”

“I see.”

That all made sense. The priests and bishops in charge of Merinesburg misused their authority to do whatever the hell they wanted, after all. Just thinking about what she must have seen sent chills down my spine.

“By the way.”

“Yeah?” I tilted my head just as Belta drew in close. The fresh bread smelled incredible.

She leaned in to whisper in my ear. “I think I prefer to be on the bottom.”

With that, she walked away, leaving me standing there, frozen in place, with my heart palpating rapidly.

“What is the matter?” Belta stopped to shoot me a little smile. “Lady Eleonora is waiting.”

“Huh? Oh, uh, yeah. Right.”

Belta began walking again.

Urgh, I have no idea what she’s thinking! At least now I know she’s way more aggressive than I thought. And she seems to like me... Right? Her actions are so sudden that I can’t get a good read on her, but I hope she likes me.

I continued to internally struggle over how to interact with Belta while I followed her down the hall.

For her part, she seemed to be in a great mood.

Elen, Amalie, Belta, and I enjoyed a dinner of fresh bread, hard cheese, and a soup made of dried meat, dried vegetables, and something resembling pickled cabbage. Honestly, it was hard to tell if this was a simple dinner or something more lavish; my standards were busted at this point. After that, I took a bath.

The manor here had a pretty big bath, with all the facilities you could want from it. The tub was massive, big enough for five people to lounge in no

problem, and hot water was being poured into it in copious amounts thanks to an expensive-looking magic tool. That same water was also being used for the shower. If you took the magic tool out of the equation, this whole setup was at least as cozy to use as a Japanese-style bath.

Why was I taking a bath in such an extravagant place after dinner? Well, we talked things over when we were done eating...

“Now that we have eaten... How do you usually spend time with Sylphyel after a meal?”

“Hrm, usually we take a bath, and then we relax on the couch and chat over some alcohol.”

“Then let us do the same. You can take the first bath.”

So yeah, there you go.

Elen was doing her best to establish how we should spend our time together. She told Amalie and Belta that it would be a good idea to try copying their predecessors first. The way she naturally stepped into a leadership role spoke of her experience as a saint.

To be honest, I still didn't really know how to best interact with the three of them. It had been a while since I met Elen, but it wasn't as though we'd spent a ton of that time together. Immediately after our fateful encounter, we were in super close proximity to one another for a time, but after that we were apart for much longer. Since reuniting, we hadn't spent a whole lot of time together out of consideration for Sylphy, and I'd spent even less time with Amalie and Belta.

In that sense, we still needed to grow comfortable with one another... Depending on your perspective, it was a situation that was either refreshingly irritating or refreshingly innocent. Sylphy and I were already attached at the hip and held nothing back from one another, whereas my relationship with Elen and the others was still brand-new, which was kind of fun in a sense.

Or at least that's what I thought at first.

“Pardon me.”

“BLEAAAHH?!”

I’d just sat in the tub to warm up after briefly washing my body, when suddenly Elen stepped into the room, covered with naught but a hand towel.

Her translucent white skin was completely free from scars or blotches. She was like a piece of art, slender but with curves in all the right places. Since she was about to bathe, her golden blonde hair was tied up, and she wasn’t wearing her usual saint veil to cover the back of her neck... Honestly, she was so beautiful that I was at a loss for words.

“...Why are you staring at me so intently?” She held her body in embarrassment, her cheeks bright red.

I panicked and averted my gaze. “Sorry.”

Why was I acting like this when I’d already seen her nude? Oh, c’mon! This was my first time getting a good look at her in the light. And we didn’t get to indulge in that kind of skinship before because the timing never worked out.

I closed my eyes, which only served to sharpen my senses so that I could feel her every move. What was going on? What was I supposed to do?

Calm down, Kousuke. Chill. You’ve taken plenty of baths with women before!



You've taken baths with Sylphy, Ira, the harpies, Melty...even Grande, right? Why are you getting so flustered just because Elen's here? If it's her beautiful naked body you're freaking out over, don't. Sylphy and Melty are amazing too. And Ira and the harpies—

“...I did not tell you that you couldn't look.”

I unconsciously opened my eyes in response, casting my gaze on the woman standing before me. She'd run hot water over herself, leaving her skin glistening wet, which only made her more bewitching. I was a fool. The captivating beauty of the female form wasn't something you could get used to. Just because I had seen Sylphy or Ira in the nude before didn't mean I was used to seeing Elen that way.

The female body was a lot like a gem. Each one had its own unique beauty and shine... It was starting to feel like I was on the verge of awakening to some weird truth about the world.

Elen turned red and climbed into the same tub I was in. Once we were nearly close enough for our skin to make contact, she sat down.

This tub is huge! Why are you so close?!

“You seem rather shaken,” she observed. “Are you not used to seeing naked women?”

“You know, I convinced myself I was. Which was a mistake.”

“...Is that so?” Elen's red eyes were capable of seeing through lies, which was fortunate for me because I was only speaking the truth. That flustered her enough to cause her to avert her gaze from mine. We both ended up going silent for a moment.

“But are you going to be okay like this?” Elen asked.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

Elen turned her red eyes toward the entrance of the bath. In other words, the changing room. In that instant, the white wooden door (I'd coated it with humidity-resistant paint) made a soft noise and opened up.

“E-excuse us...”

“...”

It didn't take me but a moment to realize who entered the bath in this current situation. Both Amalie and Belta were completely nude, holding only small towels to conceal themselves.

Amalie's erotic femininity was on full display: honey-colored hair, a bust that could make even Melty blush, and a body much more voluminous than Elen's. Comparatively, Belta was toned and a full fist taller than Amalie, which probably helped. Her legs were long, slender, and muscular, but more importantly, her body was well-balanced. She had a model physical form.

“U-um...”

“Even I get embarrassed being stared at so hard.”

Both of them began to fidget, covering their private areas with their tiny towels. This was bad. If I didn't count prime numbers in my head, I'd be on the verge of losing all composure.

In all my past experiences, the women I took baths with were aggressive about wanting to show off their bodies and press themselves up against me. In that sense, it was refreshing how bashful these three were acting. The problem? I couldn't exactly stand up and get out of the tub.

“How about you get out of the tub so you can wash off?” Elen suggested.

“Er, now's not exactly a great time.”

“...I see.” Her red eyes darted down into the hot water.

“I see?” Don't give me that.

“But at this rate, you are going to start to feel dizzy... Oh, I understand now. That is all a part of your master plan to force us to take care of you like we did before. You really did not have to go so far.”

“That's not it at all! Fine, I get it! I'll get out!”

I was about to stand up quickly, enough to make the water splash, but when I realized I would be splashing water all over Elen in the process, I decided to slowly and quietly step out of the tub and head to the shower, to where Amalie and Belta were. Of course, I hid nothing. I had no way of hiding anything! Come

at me!

“U-um... I shall wash your back.”

Amalie’s eyes were darting around at the speed of light. She really didn’t have to show so much restraint.

“...This reminds me of when we took care of you before,” Belta whispered as I sat down. She took a bucket of hot water and poured it over me.

She must have been referring to the time I was stabbed with a poison sword while protecting Elen. I couldn’t move so much as a finger at the time, so they had to feed me, wipe down my body, and even take care of any toilet issues I had. They’d seen everything there was to see.

“Then we shall take good care of you, just like before.” Elen followed me out of the tub and pressed her body up against my back. Obviously, there was nothing separating us, so that part of my body was feeling extremely blessed at the moment.

“Right.”

“We’ll...take good care of you.”

Amalie and Belta pressed themselves up onto my arms. Mm, this was truly marvelous. No matter how many times I experienced this, it was joyous. Truly the dream of any man.

“Eek!”

“Mm.”

I wrapped my arms around their hips and enjoyed the fine curves of their butts and the differences between their bodies. Amalie’s skin was supple and sensitive, while Belta’s was smooth.

None of them were particularly used to a man’s body, Elen included, so they looked me over with great curiosity, feeling me up wherever they could. I decided to mostly keep to myself, as I wanted them to explore me as much as they desired to help them get used to all of this.

“Haaah, haaah...!” Amalie was bright red and breathing heavily, her hands racing across my body. She came off as warm and gentle normally, but she was

so turned on right now that it felt like she was about to start bleeding from her nose. It was honestly adorable.

“Mm... Aaah... Mm...” Meanwhile, Belta was quietly licking my fingers, ears, shoulders, and neck. Given the way she was panting, I felt it was safe to assume that she was turned on too.

“Haaah... Ngh...” Elen was rubbing herself up against me from behind, her breath disheveled. The soft sensation pressing against my back was glorious.

Come, ladies! Come at me! I'll take everything you've got!

The battle was long and hard.

I was an experienced warrior, but three on one was admittedly a struggle. Even if I defeated one of them, the next would step up to the plate, and by the time they fell, the others had recharged. Plus, they were getting stronger with each successive encounter. It was a battle of attrition I couldn't hope to have won.

So in the end, I focused my attention on taking down Elen, as she had the highest regenerative abilities. This strategy allowed me to squeeze out a victory against all odds.

She was a powerful foe in every respect, Amalie was tough, and Belta's attack power was top class. If I found myself in this situation again, it was likely I would lose.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

We'd gotten dressed and were in the process of having breakfast, but nobody was saying a word. This wasn't a negative; the three women were still on cloud nine... Perhaps that experience was a little too stimulating for them? They were eating the pancakes and milk that I pulled out of my inventory, a sweeter and heavier breakfast than the norm.

“Anyone want some sausage? Raise your hand.”

All three women stared at me and raised their hands. They were aware enough that they could still hear me, and they had an appetite as well. Surely, they'd return to normal if I just gave them time.

I pulled three plates out of my inventory and put two large frankfurter-sized sausages on each one, then distributed them to the women.

Just when I was wondering why they were all staring down at the sausages, they suddenly turned bright red and started getting flustered. Elen dropped her fork and put both hands on her cheeks, Amalie covered her face, and Belta began to fidget while running her fingers across her stomach. What exactly were they imagining?

Okay, I'd be lying if I said I didn't intend for this to happen. Tee hee.

"Good morning, ladies."

"...Good morning."

"...ing."

"Good morning."

Amalie was so quiet that I only heard the end of her words, but all three of them seemed mostly back to normal. Wonderful.

"Make sure you eat all of your sausage," I told them.

"Oh, I will." Elen desperately picked her fork off the table, stabbed it into a sausage, and began to chew on it.

Something about this was slightly frightening. Hah hah hah. Belta made an awkward face as she began to eat hers, but Amalie was still frozen with her hands covering her face. Even her ears were bright red.

The room once again went silent, but not because the women were spacing out from the events of last night; it was deliberate this time. One of them had her face covered and was very quietly whispering words of repentance and praying to God or something, but Elen mostly just seemed embarrassed.

As for Belta, well... There was something weirdly erotic about her this morning that was spellbinding. When she noticed my gaze, she gave me a charming, satisfied smile.

“To be quite honest, I had almost given up on ever finding true happiness as a woman,” she said.

“Why?”

Belta was gorgeous. If she wanted companionship, she’d have no problem getting anyone she desired into bed with her.

“Not only am I one of Lady Eleonora’s aides, I am also her bodyguard and an inquisitor. The latter is enough to give any man pause.”

“Huh.”

“But you do not seem particularly bothered by any of that,” Belta chimed in.

“Well, you’re just you, Belta,” I countered. “What’s there to think about? Titles like that are just that—titles.” Plus, I only learned about that inquisitor business yesterday.

“I shouldn’t be surprised that even the title of inquisitor does not scare you.”

“Nope.”

Belta nodded happily. Sure, her title was pretty intense, but it didn’t hold a candle to the supreme commander of the Liberation Army, or the queen of the new Kingdom of Merinard, or the witch of the Black Forest. I wasn’t going to be put off by something like that, so I really hoped she wouldn’t be so conscientious of it from now on.

“So, how long are you going to keep that up, Amalie?”

“Urgh... But, but...” She opened a hole in the fingers covering her face and peeked out at me. “I-I cannot believe what I... All those things... Aaah...”

“I was amazed...”

“...By your bottomless lust,” Belta finished.

“Don’t say that!” Amalie screamed before falling prostrate on the table.

Elen was defeated first, followed by Belta, and then Amalie. This was in large part due to my own planning. As Belta said, Amalie had looked like she wasn’t in control of herself or her bottomless lust. She was a tough nut to crack, so I saved her for last. Honestly, she gave Melty a run for her money.

“Honestly, I am equally impressed that you had the stamina to make it to the finish line,” Elen said.

“Truly impressive,” Belta agreed.

“Amalie notwithstanding, I am not sure any of us could have handled you one-on-one. You held back that night, didn’t you?” Elen was referring to the first night she and I spent together.

“I wouldn’t say that... It didn’t feel appropriate to go whole hog at the time... Anyway, how long are we going to keep talking about this?”

That seemed to be enough to get Elen to reflect on her own comments, and she cleared her throat. She probably felt this wasn’t the kind of conversation a refined lady should be participating in at the start of the day.

“Amalie, get a hold of yourself,” she said.

“I can’t...” Amalie replied weakly, face down on the table.

It was going to take some effort to snap her out of this funk.

If at all possible, I would have loved to spend the day getting cozy with these ladies, but the world was not so forgiving. We weren’t here on our honeymoon; we’d come from Merinesburg to restore law and order across the country, which meant we couldn’t just spend our days getting rowdy. That said, deepening our relationship *was*, in fact, a part of my job.

“The Lady Saint and the disciple of God will be giving alms.”

“Please quiet down.”

The Adolist clergymen sat our visitors down in the order they arrived in. I’d prepared couches and wood box seats for this very purpose. I kept an eye on the people waiting while Elen and I presented alms to those who came first.

“Oh... It doesn’t hurt anymore!”

“I-I can walk! I can walk again!”

What form did our alms take? We were basically healing the people of Gleiseburg. Elen used her miracles, and I used the life potions, cure poison

potions, cure disease potions, and splints in my inventory to heal everyone who lined up. The church usually handled this kind of thing, but only during rituals or when a high-ranking member of the clergy was present. Normally, you had to make a fairly sizable offering at an Adolist church for them to heal you with miracles.

This was our way of appealing to the people of Gleiseburg that we meant them no harm, while simultaneously presenting myself as the disciple of God: a being who could stand side by side with the saint herself. I was pulling medicines out of nowhere that were capable of healing wounds, illnesses, and poisonings, plus using ordinary-looking cloth and braces to fix injured limbs that even magic and miracles struggled to heal. Thinking about it, with a little bit of acting, these did seem like divine acts.

Or at the very least abnormal ones.

And as it so happened, the clergymen were professional performers. When it came to using sermons and rituals to make an ordinary person look like a holy being, they were untouchable. All I needed to do was stay quiet and follow their example. In other words, I put on an expensive-looking clergy robe, smiled, and healed the people of Gleiseburg.

Any visitors who struggled to stand due to their ailments were carried to me, and I healed them with one of my many potions. I'm sure you could imagine how this all went down: People who'd spent their time bedridden and crying out in anguish were suddenly standing on their own two feet, looking fit as a fiddle and yelling about how great they felt.

Generally speaking, anyone who saw something like that would assume they were audience plants who were never really hurt or sick to begin with, but in our case, all of this was actually real. Gleiseburg was a big city, but nowhere near the size of Arichburg, so people living here knew one another and what ailments they suffered from.

And then here I came, healing them like it was no big deal.

"When I heard about this supposed disciple of God, I thought it was all poppycock, but..."

"It doesn't look like he uses magic or miracles, but he's the real deal."

“I’ve dabbled in magic before, so I can tell you right now: That’s not magic or miracles. It’s something more amazing.”

We’d developed quite the crowd of onlookers who came rushing over after hearing something was up. In fact, before we even noticed, there were food stalls popping up all over the place. The whole thing was becoming quite festive. Among the crowd were people chattering about how incredible I was; they were probably church plants.

And so, in full view of the public, Elen and I continued to heal the injured and ill citizens of Gleiseburg.

“The day before yesterday it was healing, yesterday it was distributing food, and today it’s engineering, huh?”

Basically, I needed to do as much as possible while everyone else got Gleiseburg functioning again on a systemic level. The more I wielded my powers publicly, the more my influence grew, and the better public opinion of me became.

Today, I was dismantling the shacks in the southwest area of Gleiseburg and building new apartments. This area was becoming a slum, so I was going to be turning the crappy housing here into something much better. It wasn’t completely unsanitary yet, but by improving living conditions, we could prevent epidemics from starting before things got worse. Though to be honest, I had no idea how effective any of this actually was...

“Hey, isn’t that...”

“That’s the disciple of God guy everyone’s been talking about, right? Why’s he here?”

The citizens began to anxiously whisper amongst themselves as soon as they saw me walking around with an escort of priests and soldiers. The company commander of the garrison who was accompanying me raised his voice.

“We will now be destroying all illicit buildings in the area, and the disciple of God will be giving you all brand-new housing! Please cooperate with us and quietly follow our orders!”

“Hey, wait a—”

Look, he wasn't saying anything wrong per se, but the way he was saying it was a bit questionable.

“You're going to destroy our homes?!”

“Go to hell!”

Garbage and rocks began to rain down on the company commander.

“You gutter trash aren't even paying poll taxes! How dare you!”

“Whoa, whoa! Hold it! Put your sword away! And you guys, take a chill pill! Calm down!”

I detained the company commander from behind with a full Nelson hold, then did my best to get the residents to calm down. I probably didn't deserve the credit for that—once they saw Madame Zamil take a stance with her cross spear, any rebellious spirit they had faded into the void.

Stay, Madame Zamil. Stay.

“I suppose the proof of the pudding is in the eating,” I said. “Guys, I'm not going to make things worse. Please work with me here. I promise you that everyone here will have a place to sleep tonight. And on the off chance something goes wrong, I'll book you rooms at inns myself.”

Residents from four connected shacks ended up volunteering to cooperate thanks to a combination of the rest of the clergymen helping to convince the crowd and Madame Zamil's stone-faced expression as she gripped her weapon. I had everyone help to carry out what little furniture they had inside of their homes.

“...I don't think this stuff qualifies as furniture,” said one middle-aged man in a self-deprecating tone. He'd carried out a shabby-looking shelf, chair, table, some tableware-looking stuff, and a pot for water. The other shacks weren't much different, quite frankly, apart from the boxes where the residents put their clothes.

“All right, time to break it all down,” I said, whipping out my shimmering mithril chopping axe. The shacks in this area were made of wood, so this fit the

job better than my pickaxe did.

“Well, ain’t that quite the impressive axe. But...”

The middle-aged man might have been impressed by my tool, but he seemed to have little faith that someone with my build could break down an entire home all by myself. Nobody with me was doing anything to help (for obvious reasons), so he must have been worried as he watched on.

That would have made total sense... If I was a normal person. Which, well...

“Hup!”

Whoosh!

I swung my mithril axe with great force, and in that single swing, eliminated half of the shack. These structures had low durability, so it didn’t take much to dismantle them. I checked, and sure enough, the wood and other materials were stored in my inventory.

“Am I dreaming...?” the man whispered, rubbing his eyes.

I kept swinging my axe, destroying all four shacks in less than a minute. I took any of the splinters and pieces of furniture that got thrown around and stuffed those into my inventory, dismantled them, and turned them into fresh materials.

“Time to level the ground.”

This was my first time drawing my mithril hammer in this country. I whipped it out and started flattening the terrain.

The great thing about this particular tool was that not only could you take an awkwardly uneven piece of land and make it flat—it also made the ground nice and firm, perfect for construction. It was great for destroying buildings too, even if it didn’t generate many materials.

Actually, it was a little too good at causing destruction.

Not too long ago, I’d tested it out on a stone building that was scheduled to be demolished. It only took a single strike to reduce the structure to dust, which was great, but I didn’t get a single material out of it. My pickaxe was a hundred times easier to use as long as my objective wasn’t complete destruction. That

said, this hammer could flatten a wide area in a short period of time, so I got the feeling I was going to be using it a lot for maintaining roads and building foundations for structures and the like. Oh, and since this thing was so destructive, it was entirely possible that it could be used as a weapon...not that I'd likely have many chances to give that a shot.

"It's building time!"

I was going to be constructing a two-story building with four rooms on each floor, making for a total of eight. This was the same kind of housing I built in Arichburg and Merinesburg: The rooms were big enough for two people to live in comfortably, and they were sealed nice and tight to prevent drafts from getting in. The folks in the other cities had already given it their seal of approval. One major benefit of these two-story designs was that they used vertical space in a way that one-story housing didn't, making more effective use of the limited space within the city.

"Aaand done! Feel free to put locks on if you want."

"R-right... What room should I use?"

"The four of you can discuss that among yourselves."

And so the four residents who'd volunteered their homes earlier came together to talk things over. In the end, they decided the two oldest people would occupy the rooms on the first floor, while the two middle-aged folks would live upstairs.

The older residents watched the soldiers carry their furniture into their new homes.

"I can still get up and down stairs just fine now, but eventually that might be a bit hard on these old bones..."

"The rooms seem so warm... Considering it's gonna be gettin' cold soon, I'm real grateful."

"All right, everyone. I think you guys probably have a good grasp on what I'm here to do," I said to everyone else. "Will you give me your cooperation?"

I was met with a resounding, "Of course!"

Once the people of this part of the city directly saw what I was going to be doing for them, things moved quickly. They were carrying their own stuff out of their homes without us having to direct them whatsoever, and even proactively helping me with my work. People were more than happy to cooperate if it meant moving out of their drafty old shacks and into sturdy, clean rooms with stone walls.

“What’s this about it getting cold soon?” I asked.

“In less than a month, winter will be upon us,” Madame Zamil said with a sigh. “It does not snow much around these parts, but the temperature drops low, and the wind gets very cold. Winter is rather hard on me.”

Since she was a reptile, did that mean she wouldn’t be able to maintain her body temperature? Would she slip into hibernation?

“Winter, huh?”

It’d been somewhat hot up until now—truth be told, it didn’t even feel like this place had four seasons to me. I could cultivate crops regardless of the time of the year, so that certainly didn’t do me any favors in terms of keeping a grasp on the seasons. Quite a bit of time had passed since I came to this world, so maybe I’d arrived just after winter ended.

“In any case, let’s finish this up,” I said.

“Agreed.”

Madame Zamil didn’t have any duties outside of protecting me, but just having such an intimidating presence around was a real relief. It was easy to tell at a glance that she was my bodyguard, and anyone who got one good look at her radiant, dangerous-looking cross spear and her sharp lizardman glare would think twice about trying to take shots at me. If they were stupid enough to make an attempt, they’d inevitably be split in two with a single strike.

Once the residents carried their furniture out, I destroyed their shacks with my mithril axe, used my mithril hammer to even out the ground, and then plopped down new housing. I repeated this process until eventually there wasn’t a single shack left. In their place was a series of two-story housing complexes evenly placed next to one another, forming a new residential

district.

“What’re we gonna do with all them open rooms?” asked a resident.

“Someone from the manor’s probably gonna come and take charge or something,” one of the garrison soldiers replied.

That wasn’t the only question being asked either; the people here were worried about how they were going to be handled from now on.

The company commander who nearly drew his sword earlier said something about how the folks here weren’t paying poll taxes, which meant they were so poor that they probably couldn’t. Just building them new housing wasn’t a panacea. We needed to get to the true root of why these men and women were forced into shacks, unable to pay their taxes.

In other words, we needed to deal with the poverty problem.

“That is a difficult problem.”

“It sure is a difficult problem.”

After finishing my work for the day, I met up with Elen at the manor. We sat at the dining table together and informed each other on the happenings of the day.

My powers were good for solving short-term issues, but they weren’t a long-term cure for what ailed the residents of the southeastern district of the city. Sure, if I gave them land to cultivate that could solve some of their problems, but farmwork was anything but simple.

Okay, well, if we were talking about one of my farm blocks, maybe it actually was quite simple, but normally it wasn’t. You couldn’t just cultivate a chunk of land, spread some seeds, and call it a day.

“That being said, we cannot do anything that would hurt your reputation,” Elen said. “It is all well and good that you have given them new homes, but if something you gave them ultimately resulted in them losing said homes, it would not be hard to imagine you being treated as some kind of bringer of misfortune.”

“So you’re saying we need to make sure that doesn’t happen, huh?”

“Indeed. Though it will most likely end up being Merinard that does the work on that end, we will obviously do all that we can to help.”

At the end of the day, it all came down to giving them work.

Job creation, huh...?

This wasn’t a problem that could be solved in a day, but I hoped things would work out. Any of the Holy Kingdom soldiers or folks who were unwilling to live alongside formerly enslaved demi-humans would end up leaving for the Holy Kingdom, so it was very likely that the Kingdom of Merinard would find itself with a labor shortage. If that happened, there would naturally be more jobs to go around. Plus, Sylphy and Melty would be working the angle on their end as well.

“I guess I just have to do whatever I can,” I sighed.

“Precisely. In the meantime...”

“In the meantime?”

Elen turned her crimson eyes away from me, her face turning red.

“Considering I spent the entire day working hard without you, I would like it very much if you could reward me for my efforts.”

“Roger that!”

There wasn’t a man in the world who could say no to a cute request like that. I was intent on pampering her as hard as I could.

Chapter 6:

Grasshopper Mania

WE CONTINUED TO RESTORE law and order throughout Gleiseburg with no issue, and the towns and villages surrounding it started to step forward to swear allegiance to the new government. Word of the way the most powerfully fortified city in the region fell in a single day spread fast thanks to the merchants.

“If Gleiseburg fell that quickly, we’d never stand a chance.”

That was probably the thought on everyone’s minds. And so envoys and even lords prostrated themselves before Danan in the hopes of gaining his favor.

When they came to us, they found that Danan was not here alone; indeed, the saint herself was present, as well as some clergyman or so-called disciple of God that they’d never heard of. Additionally, demi-humans, who were once treated as slaves and ostracized, were walking around freely like it was no big deal—after all, as far as we were concerned, that was normal and the right way of things. These demi-humans were now living under the Liberation Army: the new Kingdom of Merinard.

The envoys’ reactions were split into two.

“The good old Kingdom of Merinard has returned!”

This was how the envoys from villages and towns that secretly continued to harbor loyalty toward the ideals of the old Merinard reacted. They excitedly discussed future plans, what sort of laws were to be implemented, and how demi-humans were to be treated.

“This is bad. We must reorganize at once.”

This was how the Holy Kingdom loyalists reacted, their faces pale with fear as they kept their greetings brief in the hopes of not standing out. This was all for naught, however, as the beastmen demi-humans with good noses could smell their deception a kilometer away. According to them, such envoys smelled of

fear, like prey being hunted. Were they really able to identify emotions through scent alone?

“Yes. That is the nature of things. Humans, or most living beings, really, naturally smell how they feel,” Danan explained with a shrug after we finished meeting with the envoys.

He was clad in splendid military attire instead of his usual armor, and it was truly a sight to see. He was a former member of the royal guard, which meant he was an elite among elites within the old Kingdom of Merinard. He also knew how to conduct himself with the grace required of such a position. Even back when I first met him in the elf village, when he’d been wearing just a shirt and torn-up pants, he still gave off an imposing aura. At the time, I’d thought he must be the head of a group of bandits or something.

As it turned out, appearances were important.

“If you say so,” I said. “By the way, what do I smell like?”



“You have a sweet aroma wafting about you,” Danan told me.

“What...?”

I tried to smell myself, but I wasn’t able to detect any emotions. It really was incredible how sharp the senses of the demi-humans were. But what exactly did he mean by “sweet”?

“Ah,” I realized. “It must be from Elen and the others.”

“I figured as much. Though to be fair, you oft smell like that.”

“Yeah, well... Yeah.”

These days, I was spending the night in bed with at least one of the three women on a daily basis, and before this trip I’d been doing the same with Sylphy, Ira, the harpies, Melty, and Grande.

...Hm?

“Wait,” I said, “does this mean that up until now, all the demi-humans have been smelling me and thinking about how much action I get?”

“That is correct. It’s true, is it not?”

“I mean, yes. But...”

The fact that I had my sex life on display for everyone to smell every time I went around outside made me feel like some kind of walking obscenity.

“Do not concern yourself with such trifles,” Danan assured me. “Everyone is used to it already. Not to mention, it is not your fault that you are in such a position.”

“I guess... If I let it get to me too much, there’d be no end to it.”

“Precisely. One glance at you makes it clear anyway. Not that I am looking... But I digress.”

“Right, right. So what’s our next move?”

“We are going to prioritize taking control of any towns or villages whose envoys acted suspiciously,” Danan said. “It is hard to believe there will be anything resembling a large-scale resistance, but if we take too much time, we

might give them the chance to do something truly inexcusable.”

“And once we’ve taken control of the area, we’ll be moving on to the next city?”

“That’s right. Depending on how things go, that should prove to be a rather simple task.”

“Really?”

“It would be a pain if it did not. That is why we have you and the Lady Saint working your magic out in the open.”

I nodded earnestly. “I guess that’s true.”

The whole reason I was going around out in the open and acting the part of the disciple was so that I could make things easier for us moving forward. Okay, I wasn’t exactly “acting,” since it was looking more and more likely that I actually was the person people thought I was.

One of the Liberation Army’s soldiers came running into the meeting room, out of breath. Something was afoot.

“What’s wrong?”

“We’ve received a distress call from the town of Qureon! The monsters have multiplied well out of their control!”

“What do you mean?” I asked. Were they breeding monsters or something? That was the image I got from what he said, anyway.

“Remember when gizma attacked the elf village?” said Danan. “It’s like that.”

“Ah, all right. What type of monster are we talking about?”

“Gluttonous grasshoppers.”

“Man, bugs again?” And the types that could fly and hop around. I could sense we were in for a bad time from the name alone.

“Indeed. They eat all kinds of bizarre things. When they are hungry, they’ll devour weeds, crops, trees, and even animals. They will basically eat anything they can. Standard operation is to periodically exterminate them to keep their numbers from growing out of control, but...”

“That didn’t happen.”

“Either they didn’t have the manpower to extend because they were dealing with us, or they were simply incapable of getting the job done... The overall numbers and quality of adventurers dropped under Holy Kingdom rule, which probably led to an increase in grasshoppers... Now then, what shall we do?”

“Is it that bad?”

“Absolutely yes,” Danan replied. “Not only do they come in large numbers, but they can fly as well. They will prioritize feasting on the crops, which can lead to great famine. We will not know the full scale of things until we conduct an investigation, but it is likely they aren’t clustered together in one place, which means we can’t just use the harpies to bomb them out of existence. Plus, they are capable fliers, which would put the harpies in danger when they’re flying at low altitudes.”

“Damn, you’re right. Well, I think we can avoid a famine scenario as long as I work myself to death.” I had faith in my food production abilities. I’d end up making tons of fields and cultivating them until my arms fell off or my back gave out, though.

“Perhaps, but the Kingdom of Merinard must take aggressive action, lest it affect our good name. If we manage this situation correctly, public opinion of us will see an upswing...” Danan went into thought, a difficult expression forming on his face.

If we set up a whole ton of light machine guns, we might be able to take out the bugs, but I shuddered to think of how much ammo we’d have to use. Which meant...

“I guess it’s time to use my wild card,” I decided.

“Wild...card?” Danan glanced at me, his eyes asking, “What are you plotting?”

I could already foresee that my actions were going to destroy the environment, but if the bugs were going to eat everything anyway, well... Whatever happens, happens. I was struggling to figure out a use case for these anyway, and I assumed if I ever did, it’d be for something like this.

“No. Way.”

“Whaaa?”

Since there was no way I could ever use one of my gleaming magic jewel bombs without consulting the others, I hit up the large golem communicator in the manor and got in touch with Ira, Sylphy, and Melty back in Merinesburg. Unfortunately, they unanimously turned down my idea.

But my plan is perfect!

“Kousuke, those bombs of yours would most certainly be useful for exterminating the grasshoppers. However, using them would blow away the entire forest. I have to advise against it.”

“Go on.”

“With those bombs’ destructive power, not only would you destroy the trees—you would entirely uproot them. I checked on our maps here, and the town of Qureon is located fairly close to the forest where the grasshoppers have spawned. They rely on the forest for timber and other materials. A forest devoured by gluttonous grasshoppers will recover after a few years, but if the trees are all uprooted, the forest is dead forever.”

“It isn’t just Qureon that uses those woods either. Other nearby towns and villages use the Valerius River deep within as a water source. If you blew away the woods with one of your bombs and affected the river, it could cause widespread water shortages.”

“Gotcha. So just blowing the whole thing up would cause a whole host of issues.”

“Also, we have yet to confirm that these bombs of yours are completely safe. As of right now, not a single weed has grown out of the test area, and compared to the zone pre-test, we have confirmed that the magical density in the soil has gone up. Our observation is ongoing, but we cannot say anything definitively as of right now.”

“I see... Then what are we going to do?”

This was enough of a problem that even the mighty Danan was concerned,

which told me that simply dealing with these monsters using our armed forces wasn't going to be enough. That was why I came up with the idea to use one of my gleaming magic jewel bombs, but if that was off limits, I had no other ideas.

“Worry not. I am going to ask Grande to head over.”

“Grande, huh? I suppose she'd be able to clean up this whole mess.”

Grande was a grand dragon with tremendous powers. Thanks to the ritual involving gleaming magic jewels, she'd turned into a dragon girl, but her original form was that of a massive dragon. According to her, her powers had only grown since the ritual, so maybe she'd be able to take care of our grasshopper problem.

“I'll make sure to thank her for dropping by to help us.”

“Yes, please do. Make sure to prioritize doting on her at least until this whole mess is settled, even if it means spending less time with Elen and the others.”

“Will do.”

Grande had no obligation to help the citizens of the Kingdom of Merinard, but she was a good girl at heart, so if either Sylphy or I asked her for help, she'd more than likely oblige. On the flip side, that was why we needed to make sure not to simply use her when we saw fit: We had to approach her with a heart full of gratitude and respect.

“And so Grande will be flying over from Merinesburg,” I reported.

“Lady Grande...? I see.” Danan looked relieved. “In that case, she might be able to handle this problem.”

Why exactly did he always just call me “Kousuke,” but Grande got the “Lady” treatment? Whatever. At this point, if he started calling me “Sir” or “Lord,” it would just be awkward.

“Lady Grande, you say...?” Unlike Danan, Elen had a conflicted expression on her... Well, actually, she looked the same as usual. The serious tone of her voice did lead me to suspect that she had some thoughts on the matter, though.

“Is something wrong?” I asked her.

“No, not particularly. It’s just, neither myself, Amalie, or Belta have really interacted with Lady Grande all that much, so I am uncertain how to approach her.”

“I don’t think you need to do anything special or unique. Grande talks a big talk, but at her core she’s an earnest, good girl. You’ll be fine if you treat her normally.”

“Normally, you say...” Small wrinkles formed on Elen’s brow. She was clearly troubled by the idea.

“You don’t need to—”

Before I could finish my sentence, I heard something explode outside, and the ground started to shake. This was probably at least a one on the Richter scale.

“Jeez. She’s already here, huh? That was fast.”

It’d been an hour since I called Sylphy, so my dragon girl must have flown here at her top speed.

I cut our conversation short and went outside to find the front of the manor in a furor. At the center of this noise was a giant crater, which was where Grande poked her head out from, covered in dirt.

“Grande! That sure was one hell of an entrance.”

“Mm, I flew here at maximum speed and botched the landing a little,” she said, shaking herself to get the dirt off. Since grand dragons were proficient with earth magic, dirt was nothing to her. She waved a hand, closing the hole and returning the stone pavement to normal. “How embarrassing. Sorry for causing so much trouble.”

“You’ve gotten good with that,” I said.

“I’ll have you know, I do not simply spend my days sleeping.”

“Totally. I knew I could count on you!”

“Right? Right?”

I rubbed Grande’s head when she approached me, and she smacked her tail

against the paving. Fortunately, the elastic tail cover that the slime girls had made for her was in full effect, preventing any damage to the ground. Those girls saved the lives of these poor, innocent stone blocks...

“So, I heard you have a request for me,” said Grande.

“Yup. Basically...”

“You want me to exterminate the grasshoppers, yes? I have heard the details.”

“You’re such a tease. Since you’re here, does that mean you’re willing to help?”

“I do not mind. Those creatures are more delicious than you would expect.”

“They are?!”

“Indeed. You really need to chew their legs lest they get stuck in your throat, but their stomachs are tender and quite scrumptious.”

“They are...?”

Grande was starting to make me curious. But bugs...? At the end of the day, though, gizma were bugs too, so this wasn’t really anything new for me. If the chance came my way, I’d make sure to give these grasshoppers a try.

“If you wish to keep the damage to a minimum, it would be best to act fast,” Grande said. “Let us handle them now.”

“Roger th—wait. Now? Like *right* now?”

“Obviously. The damage will only spread if we leave them to their devices.”

Seriously? We haven’t made any preparations!

I flashed a look at Danan, but he just shrugged at me.

“You can manage the corpses on your own, can you not?” he said. “We will follow you after we make our own preparations.”

“For real?”

“Then this conversation is over,” said Grande. “Come, Kousuke. Take that thing of yours out. What was it? A gondola?”

“O-okay.”

I understood that time was of the essence, so I immediately pulled my single-rider gondola out of my inventory—the aerodynamic one that looked like a toy rocket.

“Kousuke.” Just as I was about to climb into it, Elen called out to me. As usual, her lack of expression made it hard to read what she was thinking, but I could nonetheless tell that she was worried about me.

“No worries,” I told her. “I’m a lot tougher than you probably think I am.”

“...I suppose,” she admitted. “You should have died on the spot after being stabbed in the liver with basilisk poison, after all.”

“Basilisk, you say?” Grande piped up. “You mean the ones that make you sick if you eat them? A human would normally drop dead from their poison.”

“I’m more impressed by the fact that dragons have the vitality to get away with just a stomachache,” said Elen.

Wait, did that mean Grande had eaten one before? It was a bad habit to try to eat anything and everything.

“But if you would like, I would love to chat about it sometime. It is quite a funny story.”

Grande held her gaze on Elen for a moment, then nodded. “Mrm, I would enjoy that. Let us do so once I have handled the grasshoppers.”

Did they just have a moment?

“All right, we’re going ahead,” I said.

“Take care. Once we are ready, we will follow in your stead.”

“Be safe.”

I climbed into the gondola while Danan and Elen saw us off.

“There,” I pointed. “That must be the town of Qureon.”

Nearly an hour after I got on board the Grande Gondola, we arrived at our

destination. All I could really tell was that it was a town surrounded by a relatively low stone wall, but given the distance we'd traveled and the direction, I was pretty sure it was Qureon.

"I suspect as much," said Grande. "Shall I land in town?"

"Nah. This isn't one of the towns the Liberation Army has actually taken control of, so it might be dangerous. Do you know where the grasshoppers are?"

"I do. They appear to be in the forest over there."

Grande flapped her wings and changed directions. There was a forest ahead, and a connecting area that had once been a grassy field. Emphasis on "had once been," because it was clear even to me that it had been ravaged; entire chunks had been reduced to bare dirt.

I didn't know whether this was the end result of the grasshoppers' endless gluttony or a sign that they'd crawled out of the ground itself, but either way, it was safe to say it was the work of the monsters.

"So they made their way into the forest after ruining the field?"

"That appears to be the case. A better place to find food than a town surrounded by a wall, certainly."

"In that case, Qureon got lucky."

If the grasshoppers had gone directly into town, the whole place would have been done for before they could even get in touch with us.

"Land in between the town and the forest," I told her. "I'll handle any of the bastards that get past you."

"Mm."

Grande began her descent. I still wasn't used to the feeling in the pit of my stomach whenever we started falling. It was...uncomfortable, to say the least.

"All right. I'm gonna build an intercept point," I said.

"Mrm. Good luck."

"Thanks... But how should I do this?"

The thing only needed to be big enough for me to fit in, so instead of building out an entire base, maybe it made more sense to go with something smaller, like a turret? And anyway, just how big were these gluttonous grasshoppers?

“Hey, Grande? How big are these grasshoppers?”

“Let me see... I would say about as large as I am right now. Normally they would be as large as my tail, though.”

Grande swung her thick tail a few times, then noticed she still had her cover on and began to take it off, since we were preparing for battle. She handed it to me for safe keeping.

“If they’re grasshoppers, that means they can fly, right?”

“And quite well. I imagine they will come flying at you specifically. Make sure not to let them latch on to you.”

“Right... Hrm, what’s the right move, then? I can roll with a mounted light machine gun as my weapon...”

Thirty minutes later, and after a bit of trial and error, I ended up with something I was satisfied with.

“Okay, this should work.”

It was effectively a pillbox made from reinforced concrete blocks, which meant it could stand up to most anything. Since I was going to be dealing with grasshoppers, instead of a semi-basement design, I placed the gunport a bit higher on the structure. Attached to that was a 7.92mm light machine gun, the kind the rifle squad used. I considered going with a 12.7mm heavy machine gun, but when I considered what would happen in the event of friendly fire on Grande, I changed my mind. Plus, it would be overkill against monsters the size of these grasshoppers.

“Um, are you sure I don’t have to worry about accidentally hitting you?” I asked her.

“That larger weapon you pulled out earlier would have been bad news for me, but this smaller one will pose me no problem,” she said. “In any case, the problem is easily avoided if I annihilate all of the bugs myself.”

“Good point.”

The way Grande was smirking raised a whole bunch of red flags, but I decided to ignore them all. It wasn't as if Qureon was entirely defenseless either, so we'd probably be fine if just a few monsters got through.

“By the way, Kousuke.”

“What's up?”

“I...am a bit famished.”

“Gotcha. Cheeseburgers or pancakes?”

“Both.”

“Roger that.”

It was important to make sure we were well-fed before going into battle, so I set up a table and some chairs outside of the pillbox and we had a bite to eat. I was only having a cheeseburger, but Grande chowed down on both of her favorites.

She was doing us a huge favor by helping out, so I wanted her to eat her fill.

“Munch, munch...”

“Hey, no need to rush. The food's not going anywhere.”

“But filling one's mouth is such a delicious sensation.”

“Hear, hear!” I nodded, wiping Grande's mouth with a napkin.

She considered pancakes to be a dessert, so she was starting off with the cheeseburgers. Man, she made everything she ate look so delicious.

“What the hell...?”

“Who are you people, and why are you leisurely having lunch here? What are you even thinking?”

Just as Grande was starting on her pancakes, armored soldiers (or perhaps guards) from Qureon visited our little intercept point. They seemed deeply puzzled by the sight of the unfamiliar pillbox and the table set next to it.

“You requested aid from Gleiseburg, right? We’re the vanguard. Though there’s only two of us.”

“They only sent you? Has the Liberation Army abandoned us?!” One of the soldiers had really lost his cool. He had a mighty set of armor on; perhaps he was someone important in town?

“If that was the case, they wouldn’t have sent us,” I said. “I told you, we’re the vanguard. We’ve got men who will be joining us shortly, but until then, we’re gonna handle the grasshoppers.”

“Foolishness. What can the two of you possibly do? That girl over there is still just a child.”

“Mrm. I do indeed look small,” Grande replied, nodding earnestly as she dug her fork into her pancakes and cut out a chunk to eat. It was impressive how she could use her crazy claws to manipulate her fork so well.

“She looks small,” I informed the guy, “but she’s actually a dragon. I’d recommend not being rude, lest the Dragonis Mountain Nation and the lizardmen take offense. That said, she’s a good girl, so she rarely ever gets violent.”

“You flatter me,” said Grande.

To someone like Grande, the conflicts of humanity were nothing for her to be concerned with on any level. At best, all we could do was shout at her like annoying little puppies.

“What? But, well...”

I decided to introduce myself to the soldier with the nice armor. Was he a knight? “I’m a member of the Liberation Army,” I said, “but uh, I don’t really have a formal position I guess.”

“Hrm? Is that so? They work you to the bone, and yet you do not have a title? They can be quite careless at times,” Grande chimed in.

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure I have no title. Either way, I’m actually pretty important, you see. My name’s Kousuke, and this is Grande. She’s a grand dragon that has taken on a humanoid form.”

“Mrm. I am Grande. I understand if that is difficult for you to believe since my body has gotten so small, but it does not bother me if you do not trust my words. Think as you like.”

“R-right... I’m Brennan, the commander of Qureon’s garrison,” said the knight with the handlebar moustache. “Behind me are my men, Hugh and Tellus.”

“I am Hugh,” the gentle-looking spearman introduced himself.

“Tellus.” The third soldier was a sharp-eyed shieldsman.

“We’re going to be exterminating the grasshoppers now,” I told them. “What are you guys going to do?”

“Wait, right now? Just the two of you?!”

“I’m going to get into this thing here and handle any grasshoppers that slip past Grande. She’s going to be taking care of them all, by and large.”

The three men gaped at us; my explanation had only further confused them.

Yeah, I get it. Of course you’d be confused. If I was in their position, I’d be flabbergasted too. But this is the most effective way to handle these monsters! Sylphy and the others told me not to use my gleaming magic jewel bombs!

“Hm... What should they do?” I asked Grande.

“Nothing. We will handle the beasts ourselves. Are they not the ones who came begging us for help? They have no say in how we conduct ourselves.”

“Good point. Guess that’s that.”

“Mrm. I’m off.”

I wiped some whipped cream off her mouth, and Grande spread her dragon wings and flew toward the forest. Once I’d watched her zip away, I opened the heavy iron door of the pillbox.

“I’m gonna get ready, so you guys should head back to town.”

“W-wait just a minute!”

“Not happening. Also, sorry, but I can only fit one person in here.”

I closed the door shut and put on the bar lock. This thing could comfortably fit

four people inside including myself, but I didn't need these guys attacking me from behind in a fit of rage while I was focusing on shooting down grasshoppers. I hardened my heart and did what needed to be done.

They might not have had a reason to assault me yet, but if they saw how powerful my light machine gun was, it was entirely possible that they'd try to kidnap me and force Grande to do their bidding. There was no way I could trust them right now.

"Now then, let's do this."

I set the heavy barrel-equipped light machine gun that was designed for the demi-humans onto the stand, then loaded it.

I hope Grande can handle them.

Less than a minute after getting ready, the ground began to shake in the forest in front of me. Was this an earthquake? Before I could contemplate the answer, the trees in the forest began to move. In fact, with the way the trees were rising and falling, it was almost as if they were breathing—except for the cracking sounds, which were audible even from my position. Then, suddenly, there was a *pop*.

Okay, maybe "pop" wasn't the right word for what happened. An impossible number of dirt-colored thorns erupted out of the massive forest like a chestnut in its burr. What the hell was happening? I was pretty confident it was Grande's work, but did this mean there was a grasshopper impaled on each and every one of those thorns?

As I watched on with my head tilted to one side, the thorns began to crumble, and the forest started to undulate again. Not a single grasshopper came flying my way, despite what was happening. Did she actually manage to get them all with that one attack?

I was watching the forest move about when someone started banging on the pillbox door.

"Hey! Open up! What in the bloody hell is going on?!"

“Ugh, shut up...”

I clicked my tongue internally. It didn't take a genius to see what was going on, and it wasn't as if I had some special insight that they didn't.

“Hey! That young girl had better be okay! I swear to the powers that be, if you sent her to her death...!”

Ah, now I got it. This guy thought I sent Grande in and had her sacrifice herself. I'd definitely told him about how she was a grand dragon, but I guess that wasn't that easy to believe.

“I can only speak to what I see, but I think Grande's okay!” I called out to him.

“You *‘think’*?! You son of a...!”

I cut him off. “If she's not, I'll be the one to finish the job, which is why I can't let my guard down until she comes back! So either be quiet or go back to town! Sorry, but you're in the way!” I locked the sights of my gun on the swaying forest.

I wanted to believe that Grande was safe and sound, but either way, it was my job in all of this to take care of any grasshoppers that got through her offensive. No matter how worried I was, I had to do my part.

Ten minutes went by, then fifteen...and then the movement stopped. I spotted a tiny shadow as it flew into the sky and out of the forest, which had seen half of its trees damaged by the gluttonous grasshoppers. I quickly locked my sights on the figure but soon disengaged. The moment I saw the dragon wings, I knew exactly who that was.

I slipped the gun mount into my inventory, then shouldered the light machine gun (which wasn't very light at the moment thanks to its barrel) before exiting the pillbox.

Commander Brennan (complete with handlebar mustache), the spearman Hugh, and the shieldsman Tellus were all waiting for me outside.

We glared at one another.

“Is it over?” the commander asked.

“Looks like it. I saw Grande fly out of the forest. She's probably headed—”

KABOOM!

A cloud of dust shot into the air as something landed close by. That something being Grande, obviously.

“She’s back.”

“It is done. I might have gone overboard since this was my first time stretching my wings in some time.” Grande shook the dirt off her body. Her compatibility with earth magic probably contributed to how easily she was able to clean herself and her clothes.

I took a look at her, then stuffed my gun into my inventory. “You really went crazy out there. Are they all dead?”

“Mrm. Most certainly. But I really did go overboard. The forest is a mess. It will probably take more time to get the place in order than it did killing those monsters.”

“I see... Either way, you did good. Thanks a bunch, Grande.”

“Hee, hee. This was nothing, Kousuke. Feel free to ask for my help in matters such as these. It felt good to get to use my magic like that.”

Grande trotted over to me, so I gave her a head rub. She nuzzled my chest. I’d made sure to wear leather armor, since we were technically going to be engaging in combat, and fortunately that choice saved my butt at this moment. If not for the armor, I might’ve passed out from the pain of her horns being ground into my chest.

“What’d you do with the corpses?” I asked her.

“I went out of my way to bury them all into the ground. They will make for excellent nutrients, no?”

“Absolutely. Great work.”

“Right? Right?”

Meanwhile, Commander Brennan and his men were listening to our conversation with complicated expressions on their faces. After everything they’d witnessed, they were struggling to keep up and figure out what to do next, I imagined.

“The grasshoppers have been dealt with,” I told the commander, “but you need to check for yourselves, right? Grande made sure they were all dead, just for the record.”

“H-hm. Um, are they really... No, forget I said anything. It is difficult to believe they survived that.”

He was about to ask us if she’d really handled them all but then changed his mind. Who wouldn’t, after recalling all those thorns erupting out of the woods? If she used that magic in Qureon itself, it would have been a nightmare. Whatever spell that was, it had a range wide enough to one-shot countless gluttonous monsters. From his perspective, getting on our bad side could mean dooming his town to the same fate.

“We will be sending our own men to investigate,” he said. “As for... Erm, as for you, our kind guests, what will you be doing now...?”

“Since we’re expecting more men to meet up with us shortly, we’re going to prepare lodgings here. Is that okay?”

“Yes, of course... But what do you mean by lodgings?”

“Exactly what I said. You already know I’m capable of making that kind of thing super quickly, I’m sure.”

“I see... Do you need anything from us?”

“Not really. There will be civil servants from the Kingdom of Merinard and Adolist clergymen accompanying the soldiers who are on their way, so they’ll be handling all the paperwork and politics. Grande and I are basically just in charge of crisis control. Ah, but if you guys have any local delicacies, spices, or other products, I’d personally love to buy some off of you.”

Commander Brennan’s expression shifted. He was prepared to offer us anything we desired—he was dumbstruck to hear that I basically just wanted to do some local shopping. “You truly are a mysterious individual, Sir Kousuke.”

“Indeed he is!” said Grande. “I know the world is vast and all, but even then, he is the only person who could ever tame a dragon such as myself.”

“Grande. I didn’t tame you. You’re not my servant. We’re partners.”

“Ah, right. Hee hee.”

Grande wrapped her hands around my waist and squeezed me tightly (but not too tightly). Ahh, she really was adorable.

“I see... In that case, we shall return to town to deliver our report,” said Commander Brennan.

“Gotcha. Be safe. Even though the town’s right there.”

I waved my hand and saw the commander off. After he was far enough that I could barely see him, I put both my hands on Grande’s cheeks and directed her gaze toward me.

“Mrmrm?”

“You’re not hurt, are you? How are you feeling?”

“What, are you worried about little old me? I am fine. If anything, I feel wonderful after using all of that magic.”

“Okay, if you say so... Just don’t push yourself too hard.”

“Fear not. My word, you sure are a worrier,” Grande teased, but her happiness was plain on her face.

Of course I was worried about her. She was using such incredible magic with such a small body. I’d be out of my mind not to be concerned. I gave her one last head rub. “All right, let’s set up camp so Danan and the others have a place to stay when they get here... And by camp, I mean housing.”

“Mm, do not forget my bed as well.”

“Of course. Now then, should I remodel this pillbox or just start from scratch...?”

If I cleaned up the interior, it’d be a perfectly livable space, but attaching a bath and other features would mean a lot more work... At that point, it would be faster to just destroy the whole thing and make the kind of raised-floor lodgings I usually did.

“We should report to Danan before we do anything else,” I said.

“Indeed.”

I whipped a golem communicator out of my inventory. At this distance, I'd have no problem reaching Danan. The plan was to tell him that we took care of the grasshoppers and ask how many people were coming in total. That way, I would know exactly how much housing they'd be needing.

Two days had passed since I'd gotten in touch with Danan and let him know how things went down with the gluttonous grasshoppers. Apparently, there was a lot of prep they needed to do back at Gleiseburg before setting out.

On our end, I finished building the housing the same day that we defeated the grasshoppers, so Grande and I were just waiting around until everyone caught up with us. I considered heading back to Gleiseburg, but Qureon was the next stop on our journey anyway, so there was no point going back when we were just going to head straight here again.

And so the two of us took naps together, went for walks, visited the town, got frisky at night, and waited for Danan, Elen, and the others to arrive.

"Mm, this is so nice."

"It is wonderfully warm. I love it."

Grande said she wanted to sunbathe, so I'd expanded the raised housing with a big sunroom, which ended up being way warmer than I expected. In fact, it felt like it was the beginning of summer, even though winter was almost upon us. After some trial and error, I realized that by double layering the glass, I could dramatically increase heat insulation in the room.

"Honestly, I think we're gonna get sunburned."

I was in my trunks, and Grande next to me was fully naked. I had my reservations about stripping down to nothing in the middle of the day, but since this sunroom was in our raised lodgings, nobody would be able to see us unless they flew over the building. Plus, we were outside of Qureon, so there was no one here to begin with.

"Human skin sure is fragile," Grande said, poking me on the chest with her rugged claws.

Stop it, that feels all prickly!

“Maybe we should put on some sunscreen,” I suggested.

“Sun skreen?”

“It’s a type of medicine that keeps your skin from getting all burned up.”

I went out of my way to make some ahead of time once I knew I was going to be building a sunroom. I anticipated that I’d be hanging with Grande while she sunbathed, after all. I was fortunate in that I could use my mixing workbench to make some using medicinal herbs and slime materials.

“It is so thick,” said Grande.

“Because you gotta rub it on your skin. See, you rub it all over... Whoa, that’s cold!”

I rubbed the gel-ish, oil-ish sunscreen all over my body. Reaching my back was a bit difficult, so I glanced over at Grande.

“I could make an attempt,” she said, “but your skin is only going to end up with scars all over it.”

“Good point.”

I ended up doing my best to spread the sunscreen all over my body on my own.

“Now it is my turn,” said Grande.

“Really?”

“Why not? Come!” Grande spread her arms wide.

She had dragon-like arms and legs from her elbows and knees down, but every other part of her was human. And she was completely in the buff. Fully open, so to speak.

“You want me to do it?”

“Obviously. I could never do such a thing with my own hands.”

“Makes sense.”

I poured the sunscreen over her beautiful smooth skin, then used my hands

to rub it on properly.

“Mm... It is cold.”

“Only at first.”

“Now, now. Do not hold back. Make sure you cover everything,” Grande said with a grin, pushing me to continue. She was issuing me a challenge.

“In that case, don’t mind if I do!”

“Hee hee... I may not be as curvaceous as others, but my young body is nothing to laugh at. It makes you feel guilty, does it not? Ira told me I should weaponize that quality.”

“What is she teaching you...?”

I could visualize Ira off in the distance giving us a thumbs-up.

Quite frankly, Grande’s figure, her smooth skin, the way I could just barely feel her ribs, her surprisingly springy butt... She lacked Sylphy’s obvious charms but was nonetheless attractive in completely different ways.

“Look, I’m spread wide open...”

“Kousuke? Are you in here—”

Just then, the door opened, and Elen peeked her head into the sunroom. Her eyes were fixed on Grande, who had her legs spread open, and on me, staring directly at where Grande’s legs guided me. On top of that, the two of us were nude and covered in greasy sunscreen, so we were erotically reflecting the light.

What’s happening below the belt? I mean, isn’t it obvious? I am a man, after all.



“...Oh, my.”

“...Wow.”

“...Hmph.”

Elen had a smile plastered on her face, and once Amalie and Belta came in after her, they shot the same looks at me. How was I going to get out of this?

“...Would the three of you like to join us for some sunbathing?” I asked innocently.

“You mean to slather your indecent sticky liquids all over us? Pervert.”

“Look, this is a natural physical reaction. Plus, Grande and I have that kind of relationship. I don’t think I deserve to be criticized for any of this.” I wasn’t just going to let her badmouth me, and I was experienced enough that this wasn’t going to shake me.

“Indeed,” said Grande. “If you are jealous, then all you need to do is join us.”

“Wha...?!” Elen cried out, her face bright red. She wasn’t expecting me to strike back, nor was she expecting Grande to provide tactical support. Still, she managed to collect herself. “One must show self-restraint. Conducting this kind of...business in broad daylight is indecent—”

““Be fruitful and multiply,”” Grande quoted. “Is that not what is written in your holy text? And anyway, day and night mean nothing when it comes to showing affection to the person you love.”

“Nrgh?! ”

With all the free time she had on her hands, Grande had become an avid reader. She was constantly borrowing books from Ira and Melty, and she was the type of person who wasn’t particularly picky about what she read, which explained why she even got around to Adolist texts.

“M-mm...” Amalie hummed. “It is a bit embarrassing, but...”

“Well, we’re here anyway,” said Belta.

Sensing that the outlook was looking grim, they both made their way to the living room. Apparently, they were going to get undressed over there.

“Urgh...!” Elen also retreated, her face bright red.

Heh, victory is mine.

“You certainly look exhausted this morning,” Danan observed.

I was a lone wolf up against four women. One of them was small on the outside but a super powerful dragon on the inside. The other three were capable of using healing miracles. Of course I was tired, but I regretted nothing. I held my head up and walked tall!

“Hah hah hah... Well, a lot happened.”

It was the next morning when I met up with Danan in the meeting room I’d made as part of our lodgings. I ended up staying inside with Elen and the others soon after they arrived, and I was worried that in doing so, I caused trouble for Danan.

“Well, I will not pry,” he said. “By the way, you have my thanks. You really saved us some work.”

“You mean the lodgings? It’s no big—”

“No, I mean Qureon. This town was aligned with Gleiseburg and not particularly welcoming toward us, but when we made contact with them yesterday, they basically surrendered immediately.”

“Seriously?”

Danan nodded. “Yes. They witnessed the two of you take down a swarm of gluttonous grasshoppers in one blow. Then, they saw you build these facilities in an instant. According to them, there’s no way they could ever stand against us. Thanks to you and Grande showing off your powers, things have been proceeding smoothly here from the outset.”

“Well, that’s good. All part of the plan, I guess.”

The main reason Elen and I were on this journey was to increase the new Kingdom of Merinard’s prestige and restore law and order throughout the country. The fact that we were able to bring Qureon under our wing without having to engage them in combat was pretty damn good as far as results went.

“Correct. This grasshopper crisis might have been unexpected, but as a result, we have been able to raise public opinion of our new government. You and Grande were the ones to take care of the monsters, and now the people of Qureon recognize that should they ever be any trouble, the Kingdom of Merinard could dispatch the two of you to handle it quickly and efficiently.”

“And then rumors spread of our work across the land.”

“Yes. The farther we go, the more the accuracy of such information drops, but even then, such rumors will help to sway public opinion. And as that happens, the number of villages and towns that swear allegiance to us increases.”

“Makes sense. Guess I’ll go and seal the deal then.”

“Please do.”

In the end, Qureon swore allegiance to the new Kingdom of Merinard. Our agents elsewhere were trying to uphold law and order in their own way, and it looked like eventually all the cities and towns would fall in line with us.

The region south of Arichburg had been under the Liberation Army’s control for a while already, and in the north, all the towns on the way to Merinesburg had been occupied and the fortresses destroyed. Of course, we’d annihilated the Holy Kingdom’s forces in Merinesburg too, then destroyed the subjugation army they sent from their homeland. At this point, there was no longer any force within Merinard that could put up a resistance against our Liberation Army. There were still remnants of the Holy Kingdom’s army here and there, but many of them surrendered immediately.

We did encounter those who preferred to die in battle over surrendering to us, however, and in those cases, they’d face the same fate that the priests and bishop in Gleiseburg did.

“Humanity is quite annoying,” Grande complained.

“What do you want us to do?” I retorted. “We can’t just hunt when we want to and sleep wherever we want like you dragons can. Humans are weak on our own, so we have to form groups to protect ourselves, and out of those groups, factions emerge. When you get a bunch of factions in one place, you get

conflicts of interest, leading to war.”

“Why not simply form one large group with everyone in it?”

“It’s not that simple, unfortunately. When people come together like that, eventually folks pop up who want to be in charge, and they end up forming factions.”

“How annoying,” Grande said with a huge sigh.

While Grande and I lay on the room’s thick carpet, Elen and the others watched on in bemusement.

“It is quite surreal watching the Fabled Visitor and a dragon discuss the social systems of humanity in such a serious fashion.”

“Agreed. Fabled Visitors and dragons are the kinds of beings that used to exist only within stories.”

“Though I doubt this particular tale would sell very well as a picture book.”

Since we’d finished our work in Qureon, all we were doing now was relaxing.

Due in part to spending the last few days hanging with the ever-wild Grande, Elen and the others were no longer acting so stuffy. They used to be clad in their holy robes morning, afternoon, and evening, but now they were sitting at the table and relaxing in casual attire. That being said, they weren’t yet at the point where they were willing to just settle down on the floor with us.

“It is rather ill-mannered to lie on the floor,” Elen pointed out.

“I’d say it’s a difference in culture,” I replied. “Where I come from, we’d always take our shoes off indoors and sit on the floor. Lying around like this was perfectly normal.”

“And what a good culture that is,” said Grande, rolling over and attaching herself to me, her wings folded neatly. “I think your nation’s way of doing things suits me quite well.” Given her large tail and the kind of creature she was, she wasn’t very fond of sitting in chairs. The Japanese style of relaxing was a much better fit for her.

Elen soon took her shoes off and stepped onto the carpet, likely driven by a bit of jealousy from watching me and Grande flirting. She then slowly lay down

and grabbed me from behind.

“What happened to this being ill-mannered?” I asked.

“Mrm... It is fine.”

My back was currently the happiest in all the land, mind you, so I wasn't about to start complaining.

After a few days of working during the daytime, then coming back to our raised lodgings and relaxing in bliss, Sylphy finally got in touch with me from Merinesburg.

An envoy from the empire had arrived, and she wanted us to return.

Chapter 7:

Visitor from the East

“AN ENVOY FROM THE EMPIRE, EH? What do you think?” I asked Elen after ending the call with Sylphy.

She had a stern look on her face. “It is far too soon for this. They are on the other side of the Holy Kingdom; it should have taken at least a few months, if not half a year, for them to hear about what happened here. And given that distance and time, the information they received would be dubious at best.”

“...The numbers really don’t add up if you consider the info has to reach them, they have to look into it, put together an envoy, and then send them all the way here,” I agreed. It’d only been a month since we took Merinesburg and defeated the subjugation army. Even allowing them time to hear about Arichburg, it hadn’t been half a year yet.

“Exactly. But...”

“But?”

“I have no idea what the empire will do,” Elen explained. “Their actions might seem meaningless at first glance but later turn out to have been the opening moves of a greater ploy. Even if we do think we can see through their intentions and stop them, what looks like failure on their part may end up being all part of their plan.”

“I see. In other words, we need to meet with them either way because trying to figure out what they’re thinking is pointless from the jump?”

“I believe so.”

Got it. So... “Grande and I will be heading back to Merinesburg,” I said. “What about you...?”

“I would love to go with you, but I can’t just leave everything here to Sir Danan,” said Elen.

“Good point. Someone needs to take charge of the folks on the Adolism side of things.”

“Yes. Which is why we shall remain here,” Elen said. She cast her gaze toward Amalie and Belta, who nodded back at us.

“I simply need to carry you back, yes?” said Grande.

“Do you mind?” I asked.

“Mm, not at all. Will we be departing immediately?”

“Not yet. I wanna let Danan know what’s going on first. I’d be leaving him and the others out to dry if I just up and left.”

We’d carried a decent amount of supplies here thanks to the airboards, but I had way more on my person. When I was running around Gleiseburg, I built a storehouse and packed it with supplies, but it would be for the best if I talked things over with Danan.

“Thank you,” said Elen. “It would be no laughing matter if we suffered from a lack of funds and food while trying to preserve law and order in the country.”

Once I’d finished talking things over with Danan, I built a few storehouses and stuffed them full of food, weapons, arrows, bullets, and other supplies, then handed our staff some money, mithril, and expensive ores. Only then did Grande and I head out for Merinesburg. Madame Zamil wanted to tag along, but I had her stay behind as a bodyguard for Elen and the girls. Once I was back in the city, there’d be a ton of people who could watch my back.

My airboards were fast vehicles, but they were nothing compared to Grande’s flying ability. She could ignore the geography of any region and zip through the air at insanely high speeds.

At some point, I wanted to try my hand at making something resembling an airplane. We had propulsion devices powered by wind magic, so all I needed to do was figure out how to make things float. Ultimately, a magical solution was probably the best one.

Hrm, given this world’s fantasy bent, maybe I could try making an airship? But

I don't think I'd be able to make a really massive one with my craft powers... Actually, maybe I should try making a new workbench specifically for large vehicles.

While I was toying with the idea, Merinesburg came into view. Why wasn't I thinking about the envoy? There was no point, considering everything Elen said. All I actually knew about the empire was that it was a nation of mixed peoples at war with the Holy Kingdom.

At the end of the day, it was hard to care about a country that was so far away we'd have to go through the Holy Kingdom and travel down the road for months in order to reach it.

"Kousuke, I'm landing," Grande announced.

"Got it. Be careful."

"Mrm, leave it to me!"

And so her descent began, and yet again I found my insides feeling...not so great. I was never going to get used to this. It probably wouldn't be so much of an issue if she gradually descended while heading toward our objective instead of just plummeting straight down.

I needed to remind myself to ask her to give that a shot next time.

Grande ended up touching down in the courtyard of the castle, something no one batted an eye at because everyone knew her. Perhaps it would be wise to put together some anti-air defenses going forward? Was it too soon for that? Either way, I made a note to start working toward developing anti-air machine guns and autocannons.

"Thanks a bunch, Grande."

"It was nothing. However, if you were to give me something as thanks, I would not refuse it."

"What would you like? Lemme see... How about this?"

I pulled out a piece of candy I'd made using the same nectar I used to make elf mead, then tossed it into her small mouth. She crunched loudly on it, which kind of went against the point.

“I love how firm it is,” she said.

“You’re not supposed to eat it like that,” I told her. “You roll it around in your mouth and suck on it.”

“Give me another.”

“All right, hold your horses.”

Since she opened her mouth for me, I tossed another candy in. Oh, c’mon. I just told her not to chew on it!

In any case, we continued to chat as we headed for the office. Before long, as we turned a corner, we ran into Melty.

“Gah!”

“Eek!”

She had an incredible smile on her face. A smile that was dripping with rage. Um, why?! Why was Melty so angry?! Neither Grande nor I had done anything wrong! We were good kids!

“He has a lot of nerve showing his face here,” she muttered.

“H-huh?” I balked. “Um, what’s wrong?”

“You’ll understand once you come with me.”

The smile plastered on her face was terrifying. Even the tone of her words felt different somehow. It was kind of like she was saying everything in monotone, trying her best to keep herself in check. Grande was hiding behind my back and clinging to my torso in fear—her tail was even wrapped around my legs.

I get you’re scared, but I won’t be able to move, so please let go!

With Grande in tow, I followed behind a very angry Melty. We seemed to be heading toward the reception room... Every person we passed backed up against the walls with terrified looks on their faces. Some people even turned around to return from whence they came or took refuge in nearby rooms. They all looked at us with eyes that screamed, “What did you do?”

Nothing! I didn’t do anything. I’m innocent, so please stop looking at me like that. I’m glad you’re praying for my safety, but still. I didn’t do anything wrong!



“This way,” Melty said with a smile before knocking on the door of the room.

“Come in,” I heard Sylphy say from inside. But it wasn’t her usual voice. Instead, she had a low, extremely serious tone.

Seriously, what in the hell was going on?

“Excuse us,” Melty said before opening the door, then turned to me, still smiling, and motioned for me to go in.

I was too terrified to walk through the door, but if I ran now, it would only hurt more later.

The moment I stepped into the room, the face I saw prompted me to immediately grab the pump action shotgun on a shortcut and load a round. “Found you at last, eh?”

I’d never forget that face.

“Oh hoh, hold on,” the man cut in before I could point the barrel at him. He raised both hands in the air and smiled, looking just like the fox bastard he’d always been. “Right now I’m an official member of the envoy from the Varyag Empire. I know just how powerful that weapon of yours is, so I can tell you that pointing it my way would cause all kinds of problems.”

I kept the barrel aimed at the floor. I understood now why Sylphy and Melty were furious.

I’d been so focused on Sylphy and the fox bastard that, at first, I hadn’t noticed that Ira and Sir Leonard were here as well. They were both trying to keep their composure, but I could nonetheless sense their rage and animosity bubbling beneath the surface.

“Long time no see, Kousuke. Glad to see you doing well.”

“You have a lot of goddamn nerve, you fox bastard.”

Despite hostility radiating at him from everyone else in the room, the fox bastard known as Cuvi maintained his smile.

“They certainly seem to hate you, Cuvi.” The male elf sitting next to Cuvi

rubbed his brows as if he were nursing a headache.

“Given the nature of my mission, I’m not sure I could’ve avoided that.”

“I have a few words for Count Isard for forcing you onto me.”

“Well, Queen Sylphyel—”

“I am not yet officially the queen,” Sylphy interrupted.

“My apologies,” the elf man said. There was a cramped smile on his face as he continued, “In any case, I have heard what happened from Princess Sylphyel, and well... As much as I would like to simply hand him over to you and end this with a smile and a shaking of hands, I cannot do that.”

I carefully observed the man—he was a man, right? As far as I could tell, he was a male elf clad in the sort of attire you’d expect to see a nobleman wear. He appeared to be a young man, but since he was an elf, it was more than likely that he was older than me. The elves of the Black Forest typically had light-colored hair, but this man’s hair was dark brown, and his complexion had a yellow undertone. He may have been an elf just like Sylphy, but it felt to me like he was from a different clan than those in the Black Forest.

“Excuse my rudeness,” he said. “My name is Kirillovich, and I am here as a diplomat of the Varyag Empire...” He glanced at Cuvi, then for a moment at Sylphy, who still looked deeply irritated. “As you can see, the situation here is, well... Hah hah hah...”

“You’ve got a lot of guts laughing right now,” I said.

“We did our own recon on our way here. I am more than aware that there is nothing we could possibly do against you after hearing that you were able to massacre the Holy Kingdom’s subjugation army of 60,000 men. All I can do at this point is laugh.” Kirillovich reached for the teacup on the table and took a sip. He didn’t look remotely nervous.

“Personally, I would like to find a compromise that works for both parties,” he went on, “but there was no way we could proceed without you here, Sir Kousuke, as you are at the center of this conflict. That is why I asked Her Majesty to summon you. I truly apologize for having you come, but given the circumstances, it would have been difficult to approach you myself.”

“I don’t particularly mind that you asked for me, but compromising is going to be tough,” I told him. “Personally, I’d be fine with blowing that piece of shit’s head off right here and now.”

“Hah hah hah... As I said, I cannot just let you do that.”

“And how do you really feel?”

“My job is to forge friendly relations with the Kingdom of Merinard, a nation that shares a common foe with us. Personally, I’d like to strangle this man for getting in the way of that, and strangle Count Isard for forcing him on me. Hah hah hah...” He was laughing, but his eyes were deadly serious. He really didn’t know about what Cuvi did to us, specifically me, until arriving here.

“What if you reported that he went missing during the trip?” I suggested. “One night after arriving in Merinesburg, he went drinking and never came back or something.”

“Hrm... I’d rather avoid a story like that, as I would be held accountable for losing him.”

At our earnest discussion of how to get rid of him, the fox bastard nervously smiled and lifted his hands into the air. “Look, I get it! I surrender. I really don’t wanna die. I’ll tell you everything I know, so just spare me my life.”

“You’ve got a lot of goddamn nerve.”

“The death penalty.”

“Capital punishment.”

“Death penalty.”

“I am so sorry.” Cuvi was lying on his back now, showing us his belly. Was this how beastmen prostrated themselves?

“What should we do?”

“I’m fine with sentencing him to death.”

“He doesn’t seem sincere.”

“Cuvi is the type of man who would gladly throw away his pride if it meant surviving,” Melty agreed. “I doubt he’s all that panicked right now considering

he still has the clothes on his back.”

“Being forced to look at his nude body would only scar our eyes,” Sylphy added. “There would be nothing to gain from it.”

“Er, the fact that he is surrendering like this in front of the most powerful people in your country and me, a diplomat, has to count for something, right?” said Kirillovich. “Even in an unofficial capacity.”

Kirillovich was genuinely put off by our reactions, but Melty was right that Cuvi would throw away any ounce of pride he had in order to survive, even if it meant prostrating himself like this. And anyway, how could we possibly trust anything he said when he was the one who betrayed our trust in the first place? Him showing his stomach to us was meaningless.

“Sir Kirillovich, this man committed the worst possible betrayal toward us,” Melty said. “If things had turned out differently, we would have lost Kousuke. He may be the Fabled Visitor, but, perhaps more importantly, he is Princess Sylphyel’s partner, and they were already in that relationship when Cuvi betrayed us. In other words, this man kidnapped the prince consort of our nation, then sold him to our enemies. He is a traitor. Do you not agree that acquitting him for such crimes would be absurd?”

She flashed a smile at Kirillovich, but right now her rage was fusing with her magic powers to create a violent aura that leaked into the air around her. I was fine because that energy wasn’t being directed at me, but Kirillovich probably felt like he was about to be murdered.

“H-hah, hah hah...” The elf laughed as best as he could as the sweat started rolling down his face.

Melty, chill. He’s gonna pass out.

“Anyway, first we must hear why he did what he did,” Kirillovich said. “From beginning to end. Even if we are to execute him, we have to at least hear him out.”

“Is he going to talk if we don’t guarantee his life?”

“If not, then we simply kill him here and now,” said Sylphy. “The longer he talks, the longer he lives. Depending on what he says, we might even spare his

life. But the moment we catch him lying, he dies on the spot. If he runs, we will follow him to the ends of this planet in order to end his life.”

Sylphy was completely serious, and Ira was nodding next to her with the same look in her eyes. I noticed that Ira was fiddling with a collar in her hands, the exact one I’d had put on me when I first arrived in this world and met Sylphy.

“How do you feel about all of this, Kousuke?” she asked me.

“Me? Well... Hm.”

If the question was whether I resented Cuvi enough to want to murder him, I wasn’t really sure. At the time, when he kidnapped me and stuffed me away like luggage, sure, I’d wanted to kill him. But when I got put into jail, I managed to break out and it resulted in my fateful encounter with the slime girls, and that eventually led me to Elen as well. If he hadn’t kidnapped me, I would never have met her, and there was no telling whether my relationship with Melty would be what it was now. I wouldn’t have Grande in my life either.

Anger and resentment could fade over time, but... It was also true that the second I saw his face, I wanted to kill him. I’d definitely calmed down, though.

I’d found his whole plot strange since the beginning, quite frankly. If Cuvi had wanted me dead, he could have killed me the moment I emptied my inventory. Instead, he intentionally went out of his way to hand me over to the white pig bishop in charge of Merinard, then let me slip away right under his nose. What had he actually wanted to accomplish? I’d found myself asking myself that question over and over again since the whole thing went down.

“Now that I’ve had a chance to think clearly, I don’t think I resent him enough to want to kill him,” I decided.

“Hrm?”

“But I do still want to shear him naked,” I said, pulling out a pair of clippers I’d prepared for this very occasion. They were spring powered and could be operated with one hand. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of Cuvi, still on his back and trembling in fear.

“Hrm... Then shall we shear his hair off before we hear him out?” said Sylphy.

“Let’s start with somewhere on his torso that won’t stand out,” I suggested. “Depending on his explanation, we can shear his head, tail, arms, and legs.”

“Good plan.”

“Agreed.”

“Hah hah hah!” I chuckled. “I’ve got enough clippers to go around.”

“And don’t even think about resisting,” said Sylphy. “The second you do, you’re a dead man. I am not nearly as forgiving as Kousuke.”

And so began our super happy fun shearing time. Kirillovich looked taken aback, but we did what had to be done.

“Instead of leaving him smooth, do you think we should make it look like he’s been eaten by caterpillars?”

“I certainly would hate that, but I think I would hate being completely sheared even more.”

“Then we shall go with that, Leonard.”

Now that we’d decided on our plan, I took Cui’s top and put it into my inventory.

“Wha?!” Kirillovich couldn’t help but yelp in surprise at the sight. I could put anything I could see into my inventory, even if a person was wearing it. My range wasn’t particularly long, but it was a useful skill during close combat against other people—not that I expected to be in that kind of situation very often.

“First, it is time to show you how serious we are.”

“Mm.” Ira nodded in response, maliciously snipping the scissors in the air.

After Sylphy threatened to kill him if he resisted, Cui let us shear his torso without moving a muscle.

“Huh. So male beastmen do have nipples.”

“Obviously...”

Cuvi was the kind of beastman who looked a lot more like an animal than some of the others, and he had two nipples. Female beastmen who physically looked more animal than man were that way too, so that made sense. They were still humanoid despite leaning more toward animalistic traits. How fascinating.

“Now then, I think that is enough for the time being,” Sylphy declared. “Speak.”

“Okay...”

Cuvi’s energy level was at an all-time low after having his torso fur decimated. His ears were lying flat against his head, and his tail was drooping... Actually, he had it wrapped around his crotch. The biggest tell was that his eyes were totally dead.

As for Kirillovich, he’d gone silent a while ago and was looking down at the floor. Apparently, his way of showing consideration toward Cuvi was to simply look away. I was glad that his way of justice wasn’t that kind that would lead him to step in when seeing a citizen of his nation being treated this way. If he had, there was no telling what Sylphy and the others would have done, myself and Sir Leonard notwithstanding. Well, considering he was a diplomatic envoy, I would have stopped them before anything bad went down.

“First, I’ve always been a spy for the Varyag Empire,” Cuvi confessed. “About ten years ago, when the Kingdom of Merinard was a vassal state of the Holy Kingdom, I was sent there with orders to collect intel and cause disturbance.”

“Is that why you aided our rebellion?”

“Yeah. But three years ago, just after your rebellion began, I got new orders from the empire—top priority orders that had to do with Kousuke.”

I tilted my head. I hadn’t arrived in this world three years ago. Did that mean someone predicted me coming here...? Well, people with those kinds of powers did exist in this world...

“Some kind of oracle or prediction?”

“The saint of the Holy Kingdom and the elves of the Black Forest aren’t the only ones who receive the words of God and the spirits. We have saints and

shrine maidens in the Varyag Empire as well.”

That made sense.

“I wasn’t given the details of what the oracle said,” he went on, “but my orders were extremely simple and clear: I was to take the Fabled Visitor who appeared before the elves of the Black Forest and stuff him into a jail in Merinesburg. The single condition was that I had to weaken his powers as much as possible first. I expected that last bit to cause me a lot of trouble, but...”

“So that’s why you had Kousuke empty his inventory?”

“Yeah. But I didn’t think it’d be so easy. The whole thing really caught me off guard.”

“Kousuke, he’s firing shots.”

“Oh, hush.”

The only reason I went along with his request was because I wanted to see what it would look like to lay out all of my stuff that wasn’t food. I didn’t expect to get attacked right afterward, tied up, and then kidnapped. Cuvi had been a friend at the time...

Urgh, I can feel myself getting angry. Now I want to beat the hell out of this guy, not just shear him.

“If you were an imperial spy from the start, that would explain the teleportation tool you had when you escaped... On the other hand, you clearly had connections to the Holy Kingdom. Your escape route was unnatural. Why would a beastman and spy of the empire flee toward the Holy Kingdom...? Wait, now I get it.” Things were finally coming together.

“Obviously you have spies and allies within the Holy Kingdom, but we grilled Archbishop Deckard and High Priestess Katalina, and neither of them knew you,” Ira said.

“They’re leaders of the Nostalgia-sect, right?” said Cuvi. “I was relying on a bigwig in the main sect.”

“So even they’re not a monolith, then?”

“Exactly.”

“But due to their actions, the Holy Kingdom is surrounded by enemies; the empire to the east and us to the west. Why would your contact want such a thing?”

“That’s a good point. Who knows what the main sect is truly after.”

It made sense if the Nostalgia-sect was working with Cuvi, but the main sect was anti-demi-human at its core. There was no way they’d want Merinard to return to its former glory.

“Look, there are all sorts in the main sect,” Cuvi said. “I don’t know the det—”

Shink, shink, shink.

Ira silently snipped her scissors. “What’s next? Your head or your tail?”

“Seriously, I don’t know what I don’t—”

“Let’s do his tail.” Melty smiled, brandishing her own scissors. “Beastmen are particularly proud of their tails.”

It was honestly hard to believe that he didn’t know anything at this point.

“Wait, wait!” he protested. “Even if I did know something, sometimes ignorance is bliss! I can state that for certain! Nothing good will come from knowing this information!”

“So you’re saying you do know.”

“I don’t! And if I did, I’d talk! At best, all I could give you is conjecture, and that’d be irresponsible!”

“Let us hear it. We will decide whether to believe you or not.”

“Mm. Speak.”

“Again, this is just conjecture on my part! Don’t blame me if it all turns out to be wrong!” Cuvi finally started talking, all the while holding his tail. “My inside contact is Cardinal Krone, the thirty-four-year-old monster sitting at the top of the church’s food chain. He’s a passionate advocate of the sacred texts.”

“What does that mean?” asked Ira.

“He deeply respects the sacred texts of Adolism.”

“Are you telling me he noticed that at some point the texts were modified?”

“Sometimes, the power of religious faith exceeds reason, but...”

Sir Leonard and I exchanged puzzled glances as we listened to Cuvi and Ira’s back and forth. Even if all of this were true, I couldn’t get a read on what Cardinal Krone was after. If he really did place that much value on the holy texts, why not just jump ship and join the Nostalgia-sect? Was there some value to operating in secret within the main sect? I just didn’t get it.

“That’s why I said this is all just conjecture. It’s only going to cause more confusion...” Cuvi whispered, still clutching his tail. Was he really that afraid of having it sheared?

“While we have more questions, for now we will spare your tail,” said Sylphy.

“...!” The faint light of hope flickered in Cuvi’s eyes.

“Like I said... ‘we’ will spare your tail.”

“...Huh?”

The door to the room creaked open like something out of a horror film.

Er, when we came in earlier, the door was completely silent. What the heck?

“But will they be so forgiving, I wonder?”

“Caw!” “Caw!” “Caw!”

The harpies appeared beyond the doorway, massive smiles on each and every one of their faces. It was actually terrifying how similar they all looked.

“Eeek...”

“It is time for you to truly grasp the consequences of your actions.”

“Gaaah?!”

The harpies surged into the room and rushed Cuvi.

About an hour later, a completely sheared beastman was hung on display at the castle gate. Around his neck was a wooden sign that read, “I betrayed my friends.” Let me also make it clear: Thanks to my and Kirillovich’s pleas, the beastman was hung from his body and not his neck.

“Now then, I believe you have visited us from afar in the hopes of forging a friendship with the Kingdom of Merinard, yes?”

“That is correct.”

After the harpies dragged Cuvi out of the room, we continued our discussion with Kirillovich. Was it just me, or was he looking a bit pale? It was probably just my imagination.

“While you operated within our borders without permission, we will consider it water under the bridge now that Cuvi has been dealt with,” Sylphy told him. “Neither party will reference said event moving forward. Does that work for you?”

“Hah hah hah... I would like him back at some point; he was loaned to me, after all.”

“I understand that. We will refrain from taking his life, and I promise that he will be returned to you when the time comes.”

“I’d be in trouble if he was rendered completely useless, so please take that into consideration.”

“Understood. Now, on to discussing business. Your objective is forging a friendly relationship with us, but what exactly does that mean? The Holy Kingdom’s vast territory and the Amagala Great Plains lie between our countries. Traveling from our nation to yours, and vice versa, would necessitate avoiding such areas. A one-way trip alone would take half a year.”

Sylphy’s point made a lot of sense. There were no vehicles capable of traveling across the ground in this world, never mind large passenger planes that could haul massive amounts of people and cargo over long distances in a single day. All trade in this world was conducted either via carriage or boat. The problem was that Merinard had no coast, which meant we were limited to carriages and walking. Doing any kind of direct trade with the empire would be very difficult. Hell, even exchanging intel would take half a year. How exactly were we going to forge a useful friendship?

It wouldn’t be entirely impossible if we got Grande’s help or used my mass-

produced airboards, but I wasn't planning on making that kind of request of her, nor did I have the resources to furnish the empire with airboards. Sharing that technology wasn't in the cards to begin with, anyway.

"We were thinking of leaving a diplomat here in Merinesburg," Kirillovich said.

"Hoh, really? And what would this diplomat do?"

"Their primary job would be information collection and analysis, and reporting those results back to our home country. They would also be sharing our intel with all of you."

"So they'd essentially be a spy in all but name?"

"Hah hah hah... You are not wrong that oftentimes diplomats are referred to as honorable spies. However, you have much to gain from this deal. Our eyes and ears are very good, you see."

"...Hrm."

We would be able to get our hands on the Holy Kingdom intel that the empire acquired. As far as frontline intelligence gathering was concerned, Merinard had plenty of excellent scouts, but we currently had no eyes and ears on the Holy Kingdom's government and economy. Even if we wanted to send spies into their territory, most of our people were demi-humans. We'd end up with more human operatives eventually, but there was no telling how many years in the future that would be. And then, once we *did* have humans available to us, it would take time before their efforts bore fruit.

"Hrm, what do you think?" Sylphy asked me.

"Me? I barely ever participate in these kinds of meetings, so I'm not really sure I should be sharing my opinion."

"It is fine. Give me your candid thoughts."

"Hm..."

I wasn't at all sure that we actually needed the empire's eyes and ears. We would gain the massive advantage of being able to track the Holy Kingdom's movements, but as things currently stood, we had the power to immediately

strike them down if they ever appeared at our doorstep, even without that information.

From a political and economic perspective, however, it would be extremely useful to procure a line directly into the empire. They were one of two massive powers on this continent, which meant they had significant international and political influence. There was meaning behind them placing a diplomat in our country: Said action implied that the new Kingdom of Merinard was powerful enough to justify such a move.

Visitors from other nations would notice this, and that would be to our advantage when trying to convince the world that Sylphy's new Kingdom of Merinard was a legitimate nation.

"...I think...personally, I'm in favor of pursuing this," I concluded.

"I see," said Sylphy. "What about you, Melty?"

"Kousuke covered almost everything. If I were to add something more, I would say that we need to show off our—Kousuke's—power to the empire."

"That strikes me as dangerous," Sir Leonard interjected. "We could risk provoking them into an invasion or kidnapping attempt."

He wasn't wrong.

"I don't think it would be an issue as long as we tightened security around him," said Sylphy. "He has nothing to fear as long as myself, Grande, or Zamil are by his side at any given time. And putting aside assassination attempts, I believe a kidnapping would prove to be extremely difficult."

"It has happened before, has it not?" Sir Leonard pointed out.

"As long as Kousuke doesn't empty his entire inventory, he'll be fine."

"Look, that's on me." If I hadn't been dumb enough to empty out my inventory before Cuvi kidnapped me, I would've been able to use my plethora of materials and weapons to escape danger.

"Um, is it really okay for you all to discuss this in front of me?" Kirillovich asked. "I am technically a diplomatic envoy..."

"Hah?" Melty, Ira, and Sylphy turned to him in unison with dagger-like glares

that basically said, “That fox bastard is one of yours, so this is on you.”

He raised both his hands and surrendered immediately. “Forget I said anything.”

He had my sympathy.

“With even Kousuke saying as much, I will positively consider your offer,” Sylphy told him. “I cannot make such a decision on the spot, however, so I will need you to wait a few days. Until then, we will prepare lodgings and food for you and your people, so feel free to rest here in the city after your long journey.”

“Thank you for your hospitality.”

Kirillovich’s envoy ended up staying at one of the mansions near the castle. The residence had originally belonged to Holy Kingdom nobility who’d fled the city the night before we invaded Merinesburg, so our forces requisitioned it once we took control. The building was currently scheduled to become an embassy once we decided to properly welcome the imperial diplomat into the city.

Oh, and just for the record, the mansion was perfectly visible from the castle, which meant that if anything went south, I could station a cannon at the castle and shower the building with long-range attacks. Our vantage point would also allow our rifle squad to snipe them from afar, though at the moment, none of that was particularly important. At least not to me.

“This is delicious, Sir Kousuke,” Serafeeta said. “Please feed me some of that next.”

“Um...”

It had been some time since I was last in the city, so she had invited me to dinner. I’d ended up holding something of a junk food party with her... The only problem was that she was glued to my side. She was so unabashedly leaning up on me that I couldn’t help but be baffled. What was happening? What was I supposed to do?!



“She must have been lonely,” said Grande, who was munching on a hamburger and watching us.

Yeah, thanks for the calm analysis, Grande. Even if that were true, this was a little much. Something was off.

“Um, Mother...?”

“How indecent...”

“Mother...?”

“Mom...”

Sylphy included, the four princesses were voicing all kinds of reactions: jealousy, surprise, whispered exasperation—the whole lot. One of them was just dissing me entirely, but I chose to ignore her.

“Kousuke...” There was a twitchy smile on Melty’s face.

“I knew you could do it, Kousuke,” Ira said.

What was that supposed to mean? She knew *what*, exactly?

“Um, I think this is probably a bad idea,” I said to Serafeeta as cozied up against me.

Tears quickly formed in her eyes. “Do you dislike this?” she asked.

“No, not at all.”

“Thank goodness.” Serafeeta’s tears disappeared at once, replaced by a bright smile.

Fine. Criticize my weak constitution. What am I supposed to say to that smile? Any man who could push her away is just a coldblooded monster.

“What exactly is going on here...?”

“We’re the ones who want to know.”

“Did he use some kind of strange medicine on her?”

“I swear to the heavens that that is not the case.”

At this point, I was starting to wonder if she genuinely needed counseling of

some sort. Even if my achievements were to blame for some of this, it was still abnormal. I didn't exactly know Serafeeta super well, but I could tell that she wasn't the kind of woman who'd normally behave like this in front of others, never mind her own daughters.

There had to be something causing her behavior.

"Ira?" I asked.

"From a magic perspective, I am not detecting any abnormalities," said Ira. "None of her jewelry appears to be under any kind of magical control either. She is fully normal."

"That can't be... Um, Doriada?" I tried.

"Yes?" Doriada had been watching on with jealous eyes and was currently putting on a front with her smile. Why was she jealous???

"Any idea what's going on from an elven perspective? You know, like that thing beastmen go through?"

"You mean mating season?"

"I was trying not to say it out loud!"

"Hm... I've never heard of elves having a mating season..."

"I also never heard of such things from the elder in the Black Forest," Sylphy added, nipping my conjecture in the bud.

In that case, what else was there?

"Hey, Lime?" I called out.

"Yees?"

Gloop!

Just like that, Lime appeared out of nowhere. Honestly, there was no need for her to conceal herself; it'd be fine if she just chilled here with the rest of us normally.

"Has Serafeeta interacted with Poiso recently?" I asked.

"Hrm, I'm not suuure."

“Bess?”

“I have no clue, but Poiso has been enjoying herself as of late,” Bess replied.

“Hey, Poiso?”

She didn’t appear. We had our culprit.

“Lime, Bess,” I said. “Can you fetch Poiso for me? Depending on what she says, I might have to genuinely punish her.”

“Kaaay! But make sure to spend some time with us later, okaaay?”

“You got it.”

The next day, Lime and Bess caught Poiso, and she confessed that Serafeeta had come to her for help, and she’d made Serafeeta an “honesty potion.” The effects would wear off more quickly than I could concoct a neutralizer, so I just had to deal with Serafeeta acting mentally young and being all touchy and feely with me until it was out of her system.

Once the effects wore off and Serafeeta returned to normal, she holed up in her room for an entire week.

I ate in the castle’s cafeteria pretty frequently whenever I was staying there, especially for breakfast and lunch. The really nice thing about it was that you could grab a bite for either meal as long as you were within the allotted time frame. I typically got up pretty late in the morning, so that helped a lot. And don’t think I was just oversleeping. I had a lot going on, okay? I was going out a lot for work around lunchtime recently, so I tended to eat later than as well.

Anyway, I’d spent yesterday chasing Poiso around to make her reflect on her actions, and then I had to deal with Serafeeta acting out of character. It was exhausting, to say the least.

And just for the record, I hadn’t done anything with her. I got the feeling it was just a matter of time, but as of right now, I hadn’t done anything with her.

Yet.

“You certainly look exhausted,” said Kirillovich.

“Hah hah hah...”

He'd spotted me in the cafeteria before breakfast. The envoy had their own chef accompany them to Merinesburg, but the kitchen at their lodgings wasn't quite ready yet, and there wasn't anything for them to cook at this point either, so for now, they were going to be eating here.

Wow, he sure can pack it down, huh? Despite his slender body, Kirillovich was quite the glutton. It would have been awkward to sit far away from him after he called out to me, so I'd planted myself next to him.

“Sir Kousuke, you are a Fabled Visitor, yes?” he asked.

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“Ah, you need not take such a polite tone with me... Personally, I only speak this way out of habit, you see.”

“That right? In that case, don't mind if I do. Oh, and feel free to knock off the 'sir' stuff.”

“You have my gratitude. So...I have something I would like to ask you.”

“What's up?”

“What type of place is the world you come from?”

“Y'know, it's actually harder to explain than you might think... I guess there are a lot of ways in which it's different from this place.”

“I see... Such as?”

“To start with, the one thing that immediately set this world apart when I arrived was the sky.”

“How so?”

“It's called Omicle, right? There was no big planet like that in our sky. We had a small moon, kind of like Lanicle, but that was it. I was dumbfounded when I first looked up.”

“Huh... Omicle has always been visible from the ground, so it is hard to imagine being taken aback by such a sight.”

“I bet. Also, lemme see... We only had humans in my world. No demi-humans

or anything—”

And so I told Kirillovich the same sort of things I’d told Sylphy and the others about throughout my time here.

“Actually, since we’re on the topic,” I said, after I’d given him a basic rundown of my world, “what kinds of places did other Fabled Visitors come from?”

“There have been Fabled Visitors who came from worlds with no magic or monsters, much like yours. There have also been Fabled Visitors who hailed from worlds much like Leece—our world. Places with monsters and magic. One particularly famous Fabled Visitor was the hero Kuro, said to have been the singular friend of Emperor Varyag, founder of our nation. He is worshiped as a war god in our nation.”

“Kuro...?”

“Yes. According to legends, he was a Fabled Visitor who was brought to our world with his wife and young daughter. In his old world, he was a commander who led an army. Skilled in the art of war, his talents as a commander were a sight to behold, and many believe that the Varyag Empire would not exist today without his contributions.”

“And this guy was an experienced commander who came from a world without magic or monsters, like mine...”

Was it possible this was the very same man who was trained by tengu and called himself Ushiwakamaru when he was younger?

Hah hah hah. No way, right? I must be imagining things.

“Um, who else has there been?”

“Another famous Fabled Visitor is the holy general, Jeanne. She played a vital part in the Holy Kingdom’s rapid growth. She had a rare eye for tactics and used her inspiring miracles to build up the Holy Kingdom into a nation rivaling our own.”

“Ooh... Jesus...”

I covered my face with both hands. This one was completely obvious. Who else could she have been but the saint from France? She was most definitely

burned alive by the inquisition, so how did she end up here? Now that I thought about it, though, Kuro was similar in that regard. Was it possible that people like Nobunaga, Goemon, or Napoleon were also among the Fabled Visitors? Compared to them, I had to be a real letdown—I was just a normal guy who played a lot of video games.

“What is the matter?”

“I think I know who those two are... They might be from the same world as me. That Kuro guy in particular is something of a legend in my country. The kind of guy who pops up in fairy tales.”

“...You are from the same world as Lord Kuro?”

“It’s looking pretty likely... But we’re only from the same world. He’s a historical figure from hundreds of years ago. Minamoto no Yoshitsune, also known as Kuro Hogan. He’s a legendary commander from my country’s long history... I think this Kuro of yours might be the same as this hero from almost a thousand years ago. He had a falling out with his older brother, then died at the hands of his enemies.”

“Kuro Hogan Yoshitsune... Only a few people in the empire know his true name...” Kirillovich nodded, a serious expression on his face. It seemed to me as though the way he looked at me had changed. “I see. And what of the holy general?”

“She’s from my world, but from a country far away,” I explained. “She also died by violence. According to history, Jeanne was a woman who heard the voice of God and fought hard to reclaim her motherland from its captors. Eventually, she fell into the hands of her enemies, her own country abandoned her, and she was burned at the stake.”

“I see... Um, what about you, Sir Kousuke?”

I waved a hand and shook my head with a serious expression, rejecting Kirillovich’s expectant gaze. “I’m a totally normal guy,” I insisted. Getting compared to Minamoto no Yoshitsune or Joan of Arc would only end up causing me problems. “To put it in perspective, I’m the equivalent of some underling at any of the businesses in the city. Definitely not the kind of guy who’d ever leave his name in the history books. If they’re a bunch of dragons, I’m basically a bug.

You really don't have to use 'sir' with me. Seriously."

"Is that so...? But you are from the same nation as Lord Kuro..."

"Sure, but that's all. Plus, he was born in Kyoto—I'm from way farther north. And on top of that, we aren't even close to being the same age. When I say we're from the same place, I mean that in the broadest sense possible."

"You say that, but in this world, there is no one who hails from the same land as he—in the broad sense or not."

"I mean, sure, but... Ugh, that's enough. No more talking about this!" I said, finally getting started on my now-cold breakfast.

On the menu today was soft bread and some sort of omelet with meat in it, with a fruit resembling an orange and pickled cabbage or something on the side. Oh, and a bowl of soup with meat and vegetables.

"I would love to hear more about Lord Kuro," Kirillovich said passionately. "He never spoke of what he did in his world, and so there are no records of any of it. He has many followers in the empire who I am sure would love to hear tales of his exploits."

He was totally ignoring his food. I could sense his desperation.

"I mean, the guy is from a thousand years ago as far as I'm concerned, and I'm not all that up on my history," I said.

"Even so, you know what he did, how he lived, and how he died, right? Everyone wants to hear about him, myself included."

"Look, I'm not even 100 percent certain that he's the same guy... But if that's cool with you, I'll share what I remember."

Kirillovich beamed. "Thank you so much!"

"But you guys are gonna have to make some concessions for us. If you want me to tell you about this guy, you'd best butter up Sylphy. Since I'm a Fabled Visitor from the same world as him, I'm the only one here who knows about Kuro Hogan's exploits. Don't think this information is going to come cheap."

Kirillovich's smile froze. Hah hah hah. The world was not so kind. I was perfectly willing to personally forge a friendship with the man, but that was

that, and this was this. First and foremost, Kirillovich was a diplomat from the empire, and I was Sylphy's partner and the future prince consort.

"Kousuke, aren't you being a bit cruel?" His polite tone broke down ever so slightly. So this was the true man behind the mask, then?

"Cruel? I'll take that as a compliment. Didn't I already tell you a little about Jeanne and Kuro? Any more than that is going to cost you."

"Hrm, you're more cunning than I thought..."

"Not at all! I'm a total pushover. In fact, people know me as a super kind sweetie pie who can't turn people down when they ask him for something."

"Bull."

"Not to cute girls."

"I may be a man, but am I not quite beautiful?" he insisted.

"Sorry, not into guys. Get yourself reincarnated as a woman, then we'll talk."

"Hrm, then I suppose I'll have to put an order in for one of those sorts of alchemical potions."

"You're not at all attached to your looks, are you...? Wait, do potions like that actually exist?"

"But of course. I've heard that talented alchemists are able to make such potions provided they have the proper materials."

"Don't say that with a straight face; it's terrifying. And look, I have more than enough partners, okay?" It would be scary as hell if Kirillovich actually went through with his little plot.

"Hah hah hah. Have you forgotten your own words? One must take responsibility for the things they say."

"Okay, you're right. I get it. I'll take responsibility. But that's only if you're able to break past Sylphy, Ira, the harpies, Melty, and Grande."

"...That's not possible."

"Right? Throw in the towel, bud."

And that was how I managed to avoid the threat of Kirillovich vying for my affections. If anything, what he told me about the alchemy stuff had shocked me way more than the info about Kuro and Jeanne.

I made a mental note to ask Ira about such crazy potions later on.

Epilogue: A Fatal Rift

“IMPOSSIBLE! How can this be?!”

I couldn't resist the urge to yell when I heard the soldier's report. The man's shoulders trembled in fear as I closed my eyes and silently recited the scripture in order to calm my unruly heart. Normally this would immediately help me settle down, but right now it wasn't working.

Of course it wasn't.

The 60,000 men I'd sent to execute the rebels in one of our border vassal states had been annihilated in their first battle, and Commander Eckhart was killed in battle. The knight that Krone raised from the ground up took the remaining men and fled back here to the Holy Kingdom.

When I first heard this report, I thought it was some kind of awful joke. Yet no matter how many times I asked the man in front of me, he insisted it was the truth.

“You are serious...?”

“Y-yes... We received this intel directly from the survivors who made it to Gyrgyz.”

“How could this be...?”

I'd originally planned to dispatch 20,000 men at most to take care of the rebels. Much to my own surprise, however, Krone offered to cooperate, so just to be safe, we scrounged up three times as many men.

I already knew that the rebels were calling themselves the Liberation Army. I also knew that we'd suffered thousands of casualties from our soldiers stationed in Merinard. The talentless pig there had tried and failed to hide this from me.

At the same time, I was also aware of the fact that the person at the head of

this supposed Liberation Army was a dark elf called the Witch of the Black Forest, and that the people at the core of her “army” were the remnants of those who rebelled three years ago. With the help of the army, I was able to get a somewhat accurate estimation of their forces. Or at least I thought I did.

At best, they had 1,000 to 3,000 men. Any more than that and their forces would be unsustainable.

Generally speaking, soldiers produced nothing. Depending on how they were used, they could provide a boost to the economy by upholding law and order or procure meat through monster hunting, but none of that made up for how much it cost to maintain them.

The rebels could cover for some of that by acquiring funds and food from the towns and villages they occupied, but that would only be enough to account for 1,000 to 3,000 men. That was the conclusion our army had come to, and it made sense to me.

People like the ones who made up the Liberation Army typically lacked training, and they were unlikely to have access to any equipment other than second-rate junk requisitioned from the towns and villages they attacked. Logically speaking, 10,000 of our regular army elites would be able to annihilate them with no problem.

Or at least that was supposed to be the case.

“How many survivors are there...?” I demanded.

“Less than 15,000 men have made it to Gyrgyz thus far,” the soldier reported. “Arrivals have been slow since so many are injured and require others to look after them. The men who’ve made it back already are the ones who were still in relatively good shape. In total, only about half of our men survived.”

“30,000 men were killed...? Unbelievable.”

“According to reports, the enemy used harpies to attack from the sky with explosive magic tools, and they had some kind of mysterious vehicle that could move without a horse. They were unable to grasp what kind of weapon it was using to slaughter our men one-sidedly.”

“I can understand the harpies and their explosive magic tools, but what do

you mean they could not grasp what kind of weapon the vehicle had?" I asked the man.

Explosive magic tools were easy to understand. Preparing multiple one-use offensive magic tools was no simple task, but considering how much it cost to make them and what kind of raw materials they required, it wasn't impossible.

But what were this vehicle and weapon he spoke of?

"Even the soldiers who took the field could not explain it well... They heard something similar to thunder, or the wings of killer bees, then in the next moment, they were assaulted by something so fast that they could not see it. The descriptions are all over the place, but I believe it to be some kind of new weapon."

"I need more details."

"The mysterious thunderous weapon was the one that took the most victims, and according to eyewitness reports, it was attached to a carriage-like vehicle without wheels that was able to move without the need for a horse. As soon as its thunderous sounds echoed throughout the battlefield, the men in the frontlines fell one after another like stalks of wheat being cut down. The weapon pierced their metal shields, tore apart their armor, passed straight through their bodies, and even killed the men standing behind them. Some have theorized that it was firing numerous projectiles moving faster than the eye could track, but I was unable to confirm that."

I gripped my head. If I were to go by everything he said, these were no ordinary rebels—they were something else entirely. Something even worse than the imperial elites spread throughout the Amagala Great Plains in Merinard.

"For the sake of clarity, how many thousands of men did the enemy have...?"

"According to the survivors, excluding the harpies in the sky, the only enemies on the battlefield were the ones riding in the strange vehicles I've spoken of. In other words... Less than 100 people."

I looked up at the ceiling. What in the world were we dealing with here?

"We must look into this... And you say Deckard from the Nostalgia-sect is

among them, yes?”

“That appears to be the case...”

“I must meet with Cardinal Dalton. Notify him immediately.”

The soldier exited the room in a rush.

Dalton was at the head of the Nostalgia-sect. Recently, the saint he always kept close had left his side along with one of his closest friends, which had led his faction to quickly lose much of its power.

I knew full well that the saint had been sent to the Kingdom of Merinard quite a while ago. According to the intel I had, she was staying in Merinesburg, which meant she had likely already been taken captive by the Liberation Army. Worse-case scenario, she had been caught up in a battle and was already dead.

Dalton’s trusted friend Deckard was just as inscrutable as he was. Why had he picked now to go to Merinard? Why was he cooperating with the Liberation Army? The Nostalgia-sect within the Holy Kingdom was rapidly losing its standing. There were even those making moves to declare them heretics and subject them to an inquiry. My position was to not intervene, but...

“What are they planning...?” I wondered aloud. “What are they hiding...”

“W-we have an emergency!” A different man came rushing into my room. “Cardinal Krone, he...!”

“Now what?! Can’t you at least knock?!” I yelled instinctively.

But the words that came out of his mouth next were so incomprehensible that I needed them repeated three times.

“Civil war in the Holy Kingdom?” said Sylphy.

“Yes.” Kirillovich nodded, an extremely serious expression on his face. “This is accurate intel.”

It was two days after we’d sheared Cuvi. The day after Kirillovich and his envoy settled down in the Varyag Empire Embassy (Temp), he made a request for an audience with Sylphy. The information he shared with us was as follows:

“There are indications that a civil war will soon break out in the Holy Kingdom. It is extremely likely that the gears are already moving.”

“I imagine the survivors from their subjugation force should be arriving soon,” Sylphy mused. “Was that the trigger?”

“It is possible,” said Kirillovich. “However, it does not appear as though there will be a huge military clash. Small squads of elites are assassinating important targets and capturing others.”

“So they’re going after the top brass... A coup d’etat, then?” I said. “That would only be possible if the mastermind had access to elite men.”

Kirillovich nodded. “Correct. That would be Cardinal Krone, the very same man that Cuvi mentioned the other day. He is a clergyman of the main sect who managed to climb his way to the seat of cardinal at a young age, and he is also in charge of the holy knights. From what I have gathered, it is those very knights who are carrying out his insurrection.”

I see. Then...

What was our move? As the Kingdom of Merinard.

“All we can do for now is keep watch,” said Melty. “We don’t have an official in with them at this point, so I think we should keep trying to make contact through Archbishop Deckard and High Priestess Katalina, while also quietly expanding our control over the region up to the border between us.”

“Hrm... You are right,” Sylphy agreed. “As long as we can regain control of Merinard’s territory... Let’s stick to that plan. Please contact Sir Deckard and ask him to gather as much information about this Krone man and why he might have thrown this coup d’etat.”

“As you wish.” Melty then turned her gaze on me and... Wait, what? Did she want my opinion?

“I’ve got nothing. Like you said, Sylphy, I think our only option is to gather intel and keep our finger on the pulse of things. No matter what, we can never have too much money or supplies, so I’ll be working hard to make sure we have plenty of both.”

“Mm, right. As long as we are of the same mind, then.” Sylphy turned to our visitor. “Sir Kirillovich, you have my gratitude for the information.”

“It is an honor to have been of service,” he said. “How can I hope to forge a good relationship with Merinard if I cannot show you how useful my people and I can be? As soon as we acquire more intel, I will get in touch.”

“I look forward to it.”

Kirillovich bowed gracefully and left the room. Once Sylphy was sure he was gone, she let out a deep sigh.

“My word... I doubt he would lie about anything we could easily investigate ourselves, but that does not mean we can simply trust everything he says. What a pain.”

“I’ll start verifying the information,” Melty assured her.

“Please do. Even if what he said was true, we can’t possibly stick our hands into the fire when we don’t even have enough people on hand to secure our own footing. At the end of the day, all we can do is keep an eye on things. Kousuke, I apologize for giving you more work, but I need you to investigate increasing production on our food supply, as well as technology that can preserve it. Also, I would be immensely grateful if you developed some magic tools that could increase our citizens’ quality of life. Oh, and some way to give them more jobs as well.”

“I’ve got your back on the food stuff, but you’re kind of asking the impossible with everything else!” I wasn’t the sort of useful item that you could shake upside down and watch infinite ideas fall out!

Sylphy rubbed her hand over her temple. “It’s just... We have so many problems to contend with that I can’t help but want to ask the impossible of you...”

Of course she was asking the impossible. She’d suddenly found herself having to provide support to a bunch of demi-humans who had been slaves up until now. If we didn’t help them as they struggled to find work, where would that put us, as the Liberation Army?

“I won’t be able to fix everything in one go, but I’ll do my best to come up

with some solutions,” I promised. “If you need my powers for anything else, don’t hesitate to ask, okay?”

“I will,” said Sylphy. “For now, I would appreciate it if you gave me some love.”

“As you wish.”

And so for a time, I found myself gently caressing Sylphy’s hair. It wasn’t long before Melty found herself incapable of simply watching, though, so I ended up stroking hers as well.

Afterword

THANK YOU SO MUCH for grabbing Volume 7 of *Survival in Another World with My Mistress*! It's been a bit, huh? Volume 7 is finally here. I did it!

Honestly, the biggest event that's happened since the last volume is that I had my wisdom teeth pulled. Basically, things have been totally peaceful. I hope it's the same for you guys too! Stay safe!

Let me tell you about how things are going for me at the moment. That is to say: The games I've been playing a bunch lately. Over the new year, I played *Baldur's Gate 3*, the big game that won Game of the Year across a bunch of outlets. More recently, I've been capturing cute deformed monsters and living out my survival game dreams in a mysterious new world. Look, I gotta make sure to have my pulse on the big titles, right? Both games received a ton of awards and have sold super well, which makes sense now that I've played them. They really are a blast! Games truly are nutrition for the soul.

Now, then, it's time to talk about some of the lore that doesn't get touched on in these books, and this time, it's pretty integral stuff to the story. I'm talking about demi-humans. Demi-humans are fundamentally humans who have been given unique traits through the use of advanced technology. They are essentially a subspecies of human, and as such, all demi-humans are capable of breeding with humans. However, when two demi-humans mate, unless their unique traits are similar, it's more difficult for them to produce a child. When demi-humans try to breed with standard humans, though, it is only slightly difficult to conceive a child.

When related species mate, there are times when the qualities from both sides mix together in weird ways, but generally speaking, most children end up only resembling one of the parents. Oh, and when I say related species, I mean instances like beastmen or humans and elves. In this world, elves are more like humans than any other demi-human.

As for species that pop up in the series, the one that seems close to humans

but is actually quite different is the cyclops, Ira's species. The cyclops is a species with a long evolutionary history, you see. The line started with giant cyclops, then cyclops ogres, then, through sudden mutation, became much smaller and miraculously stabilized as the actual species seen in this story. Interestingly enough, on rare occasions, cyclops give birth to children who revert to having horns or bigger bodies.

Hm? Grande? Well, she's acquired her human form through like, you know, mysterious powers. It's all pretty convenient to be honest... "Is that okay?!" Look, dragons have significantly more vitality and a much larger capacity for magic than any other species. Grande got her human form at great cost, which is why she has such a convenient form. Right now, her very being is basically magic itself. Before Grande acquired her new form, Melty was able to overpower her in close-quarters combat, but if she were to challenge her now, in terms of pure magic capacity, Melty would stand little chance of coming out on top. That being said, Grande doesn't do well around Melty, so it's hard to say whether she'd actually be able to go all-out in combat against her.

So who made the demi-humans and why?

A bunch of beings with absolute power over science and technology got big heads and were obsessed with the supposed potential of humanity. They ended up mixing human genes with a bunch of other stuff, resulting in demi-humans. They didn't actually have a real objective, just a deep sense of curiosity along with their intellectual minds. Those higher beings found a habitable world, dumped the demi-humans and humans there, and are observing them from afar, all the while laughing, getting angry and sad, and grinning. To the people who got mixed together, those beings are honestly pretty damn evil.

Anyhow, that's all for this time around!

I want to extend my gratitude to "I" from GC Novels, "O," Yappen, who handled all the illustrations, everyone who had something to do with publishing this volume, and of course, everyone who went out of their way to pick up a copy. Thank you so much!

Hopefully, we can meet again in the next volume!



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