

4

Another World Survival

Min-maxing
my Support and
Summoning
Magic

Author: Yokotsuka Tsukasa

Illustrator: Manyako


Hanashi
MEDIA

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Hanashi
MEDIA



FIRST YEAR MOODLE SCHOOER
MIA TAGAMIYA

FIRST YEAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
KAZUHISA KAYA

THIRD YEAR MOODLE SCHOOER
ARISU SHIMOZONO

THIRD YEAR MOODLE SCHOOER
TAMAKI RYUKI





"SORRY, WHAT JUST
HAPPENED WAS..."

WITHOUT THINKING
ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE,
I PRESSED MY TREMBLING
LIPS AGAINST HERS.

"YOU THOUGHT I WAS ABOUT
TO BREAK, DIDN'T YOU?"

MIA'S EYES WIDENED
IN ASTONISHMENT.





"RUSHIA, COULD YOU
GUIDE US
TO THE
TRANSFER GATE?"

RUSHIA

"UNDERSTOOD,
I WILL LEAD THE WAY."

LEAN

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ANOTHER WORLD SURVIVAL

MIN-MAXING MY SUPPORT AND
SUMMONING MAGIC

STORY BY YOKOTSUKA TSUKASA

ART BY MANYAKO



Chapter 77: Battle in the Fortress City 1

Mia and I soared through the sky, heading towards the fortress city. It was just before noon on the third day since we arrived in this other world. Our encounter with a monster named Globster in a cave, which appeared to be the stronghold of the orc invasion from our school's mountain, had forcefully teleported the two of us. We materialized atop a small hill, alone but determined. Although we swiftly defeated the teleporting monster, our attention soon turned to the ongoing battle against the monsters in the nearby fortress city, compelling us to intervene.

As always, my flying skills left much to be desired. I struggled with maintaining a sense of direction and often veered off course, unable to maintain a steady flight. Seeing my plight, Mia took my hand and guided me, her voice filled with understanding. "Sorry."

"Mm. It's okay. We can't expect Kazu to possess exceptional reflexes. We just have to accept that," Mia reassured me.

Even with her reassurance, the fact remained that my flying was unreliable. If only I didn't have to worry about drawing attention or depleting my magic power, I would summon a Griffin to carry me. Riding on the back of my familiar would surely alleviate my flying troubles, right?

Pushing aside such thoughts for now, we glided barely a meter above the grasslands, descending in altitude and moving at a pace comparable to a slow-moving car. The tall grasses below swayed like ocean waves. Under different circumstances, we might have savored this flight as a moment of tranquility.

Flying alongside me were my two familiars—a crow and a wind elemental. They accompanied us on our journey, loyal and watchful.

Shifting my gaze ahead, I surveyed the area surrounding the town through a pair of binoculars I held with one hand. We were flying from the south side of the hill to the north, benefiting from the backlighting that made it challenging

for the enemy to spot us. On the other hand, it provided us with an advantageous position to observe the enemy's movements.

The western wall of the town had suffered severe damage, with breaches and gaps scattered along its length. Giants scaled the wall, climbing up and disappearing to the other side. As they did, they swept away any soldiers in their path, knocking them down with their colossal hands.

Once the six giants had passed, not a single soldier remained to defend the wall. They had either been annihilated or managed to escape. Considering the circumstances, the latter seemed more likely, as staying to defend would have been a futile sacrifice.

Seizing the opportunity, human-like creatures with green skin, reminiscent of the monsters we had encountered earlier, clung to the damaged wall. They worked together, erecting rope ladders and skillfully scaling the vertical surface, showcasing their remarkable teamwork.

These green-skinned monsters displayed intelligence far surpassing that of the orcs.

“This feels like the end of the tutorial,” I contemplated within myself. It was difficult to accept that all the intense battles we had experienced so far were merely part of a tutorial, but we needed to embrace such a mindset.

Right now, it was just the two of us, and our frontline fighters consisted solely of familiars. Without Arisu or Tamaki, our trump cards, we needed to exercise even greater caution than before. If necessary, we might have to make the tough decision of sacrificing our battle results. In the worst-case scenario, we would have to abandon the town and flee. However, we would do our utmost to prevent such a situation from occurring.

“Kazu-chan, let's scout around a bit,” Mia suggested, holding my hand and veering towards the right. Her intention was to cling to the outer wall from a position invisible from the collapsed section. As I surveyed the area, I couldn't spot any soldiers on the wall. Were they all engaged in combat, defending against the invaders within the town?

It was a reckless and seemingly hopeless battle, but for the defenders, it was a fight to protect their homes. Despite our careful flying, we reached the wall in

less than 10 minutes.

Finally, we arrived at the wall.

Ivy and moss grew on the dilapidated stone structure, indicating the absence of maintenance and repair. It seemed as if maintenance and repair were foreign concepts here, and the wall had likely stood since ancient times, continually used.

Upon closer examination, I noticed that the area next to the wall had transformed into a moat. Perhaps the giants had filled it with stones or other materials before the wall collapsed. Now, I wondered what lay on the other side of the wall.

With the help of our crows and the power of remote viewing, we easily surveyed the interior beyond the wall. The area just behind the wall where we stood appeared entirely deserted, far removed from the ongoing fighting. It seemed that no forces had been deployed on this side.

I pondered what the defenders' plan was in case of diversion tactics or whether they were confident that no diversions would occur. "Maybe they're completely stretched thin," Mia mumbled, considering another possibility.

In reality, when the crows conducted an aerial survey earlier, it didn't seem like there were many soldiers present. It was hard to count the exact number, and it was tough to tell civilians from soldiers. The soldiers' attire also appeared inconsistent. There were probably over a hundred, but fewer than two hundred soldiers. Well, there was no use dwelling on it now.

Mia cast fly magic on both of us once more, and we ascended to the top of the wall, standing on the path constructed atop it, overlooking the town. From this elevated position, we directed our gaze towards the area where the wall had crumbled—the site of the ongoing massacre.

Six giants caused destruction, tearing down houses, destroying barricades, and throwing aside soldiers. The soldiers didn't remain idle either. Despite being bombarded by dozens of arrows, the giant shielded its face with a gesture of annoyance.

The arrows that seemed to pierce its hairy hand fell harmlessly to the ground as it casually shook its hand. The arrows had failed to penetrate its skin.

The archers were hesitant, overwhelmed by the difference in military force. At that moment, the green-skinned soldiers retaliated by shooting arrows at the human archers, resulting in their successive fall.

“The giants are acting as shields while the green guys attack the surroundings. Impressive teamwork,” I remarked.

“Hobgoblin,” I said, puzzled.

Mia explained, “Hobgoblin. In games, they are often portrayed as a more advanced type of goblin, soldiers on the same level as orcs.”

“But... goblins haven't appeared, have they?” I questioned.

“It's just a temporary name. Goblins are typically depicted as lesser demons, so it doesn't quite fit,” Mia clarified.

That made sense. We could assign them a provisional name for now. Hopefully, we would learn their actual names in the white room. Although, in the white room, they hadn't revealed the local names of hellhounds or giant wasps either.

Or perhaps it was because we had already given them names? I presented this hypothesis to Mia. She murmured, “Maybe,” and looked up at me.

“But it doesn't matter now. It's not important,” she concluded.

“Right, you're correct,” I agreed.

“Even in Atreim, there were monsters. Even more powerful ones,” Mia commented.

“I understand you want to insert a joke, but sorry, I didn't quite get it,” I admitted.

Mia appeared disappointed and shook her head. Oh well, how would an aspiring hero survive with jokes, anyway?

“Okay, let's focus... What should we do, Kazu?” Mia asked.

I peered out once again at the western side of the town, where the battlefield raged. A giant had left the main battle and was pursuing human soldiers in retreat.

Ah, this might be an opportunity.

“Let's attack that straggler over there,” I suggested.

“We can help the people and achieve two objectives at once,” Mia added.

“Let's not rely on gratitude, though. We need to consider the possibility of being attacked by humans as well,” Mia reasoned, clapping her hands together after a moment of contemplation. “We're strange individuals who control peculiar magic. Sort of like witches, right?”

“Even without that, our appearance...” I trailed off. Currently, we were wearing our school uniforms and gym clothes over backpacks. While we might appear like normal students to Japanese people, to the inhabitants of this world, who knows?

The glimpses I caught of the townspeople revealed that they wore simple garments. Men even wore skirts tied with a string around their waists.

The fleeing soldiers, on the other hand, had leather armor over their clothing. Our appearance would undoubtedly stand out. We wouldn't be able to complain if we were accused of heresy and put on trial.

No, we would run away even before we had the chance to complain.

“Also, look. I'm accompanied by a familiar that only looks like a monster,” I commented. I glanced behind me to see the Wind Elemental, a translucent, naked woman made of wind. Without any knowledge, even I would mistake her for a monster. Commanding multiple familiars would surely raise suspicions about my intentions.

However, I knew I couldn't defeat the giant without the Wind Elemental. The protection of a familiar was absolutely necessary.

And considering this battle as a preliminary one, I wanted to conserve my MP as much as possible while still securing a victory.

“Hmm, I agree with Kazu. Let's conserve our MP and summon a new familiar at level 7,” Mia suggested.

Generally, the strength of a summoned familiar was around two ranks lower than a weapon skill holder. If we could summon a Centaur Knight at rank 7, it would be comparable to Arisu at Spear Art rank 5.

Of course, Arisu was much more skilled and intelligent in battle.

Based on what I had observed earlier, I felt that Arisu at Spear Art rank 5 might be able to handle the strength of the giant somehow. However, the giant's power was overwhelming, and Arisu was at a disadvantage in terms of reach. We would need an appropriate battle strategy. But it was no different from previous battles. Even when up against more powerful opponents, Arisu and Tamaki made up for the power difference. They used their skills to make up for their physical weaknesses. Even if the opponent was a giant, the gap was merely greater. Well, I understood that the word “merely” didn't do justice to the challenge, but generally, that was the direction we needed to take. And if the enemy was a simple-minded fool, there were plenty of ways to deal with them.

“First, let's engage in one battle,” Mia said as she cast Fly on both of us once again, and we entered the interior of the town accompanied by two Wind Elementals.

We flew low and hid behind buildings as we approached the giant. It was moving southward away from the main unit, chasing soldiers and unaware of us.

“Mia, let's start with Stone Bind,” I suggested. Stone Bind was a rank 4 earth magic spell that affected stones.

Luckily, the town had paved some of its streets with cobblestones, including the area where the giant was heading. Stones affected by Stone Bind possessed strong adhesive properties. If we could apply it to the cobblestones, we should be able to immobilize the giant's feet. If it worked well, Mia could finish it off with a series of attack spells. If not, the Wind Elementals could assist in restraining the giant while we continued our barrage of attacks. Either way, for

now, we would rely on Mia's attack spells until I could summon my rank 7 familiar.

As we turned the corner, we caught sight of the giant. Its hideous face gleamed as it had just claimed another soldier. Red-black liquid sprayed everywhere, reminiscent of crushed ketchup packets. I felt angry even though such scenes didn't shake me anymore. I clenched my fists, determined to act.

“Mm,” Mia tightened her lips. Just like me, she was also angry.

We landed in the shadows of a building about 15 meters away from the giant. I cautiously stuck my face out and looked up at its towering figure.

Even now, it seemed oblivious to our presence, continuing to smile with satisfaction as it stood atop the crushed soldiers. Up close, its face resembled that of a toddler—a neotenic appearance, one might say. But to me, it was an ugly visage.

“Let's go,” I whispered.

“Mm. Leave it to me,” Mia replied with determination.

The combat began.

Chapter 78: Battle in the Fortress City - Part 2

Peering out from behind cover, I observed the colossal giant standing 15 meters away on the street. It was immense, measuring four meters, roughly the same size as a certain suffocating giant robot trapped in an iron coffin. However, seeing it up close was an entirely different experience. Its intimidating presence surpassed that of orcs or bees.

When I was young, I once saw an elephant at the zoo. With every step it took, the ground trembled, emitting a deep thud, thud sound. I gazed up at the towering creature, my mouth agape in awe.

At that time, I felt secure. I knew the elephant wouldn't harm me, and there was an impenetrable barrier between us. But now, the situation was different. This monstrous being, as massive as the elephant from my memories, was ferocious, and there was no barrier protecting me.

As the battle began, Mia cast Stone Bind, causing the giant's feet to adhere to the embedded bricks on the ground.

All right, got it.

"Mia, start with Silent..." I instructed.

"Okay. Silent Field... Poison Smog," she responded.

First, we activated Silent Field to prevent the giant from making any noise. Then, a swirling cloud of blackish-green emerged, enveloping the giant's body.

There should have been a scream filled with the giant's agony, but the Silent Field rendered it inaudible.

Poison Smog was a formidable magic that generated a toxic fog. While there existed a water magic similar to Rank 3, this Rank 5 wind magic had a highly potent and rapidly acting effect.

The smog was highly toxic, capable of corroding the skin upon contact. If someone were to remain within the fog for an extended period, they would

typically die within 15 seconds. In group battles, this magic proved immensely effective. When combined with immobilizing spells like Stone Bind, it showcased a truly sinister performance.

Actually, even from outside the cloud, we could witness the Giants writhing in agony through their silhouettes. Their feet were firmly stuck to the ground, rendering them unable to escape... or so it seemed.

We heard the loud roars of the Giants from far away. The Silent Field had been shattered.

“Is it a magic breaker like the General?” I exclaimed.

Despite the collapse of the Silent Field, it appeared that the Stone Bind spell remained intact. The Giants' feet remained trapped in the bricks, and the dense cloud of magic continued to envelop them.

“Could it be that Silent Field, being rank 2, can be broken, while Stone Bind at rank 4 and Poison Smog at rank 5 cannot?” I pondered.

Alternatively, there was the possibility that this particular Giant possessed a magic-breaking ability limited to spells of rank 3 and below...

If my hypothesis held true, there was no need to worry about being caught this time. The Giant would succumb to the lethal effects of the poisonous cloud. However, the recent roar might have alerted other Giants and Hobgoblins. Our next encounter wouldn't be as smooth.

No, wait a moment...

The ground trembled as if being torn apart. The Giant exerted tremendous force to lift the bricks from the ground and took a step forward. With each step, the earth quaked violently.

“What incredible strength this creature possesses!” I remarked.

Fortunately, the enemy's resistance was not formidable enough. Exhausted, they fell to their knees, even after breaking through the toxic mist.

Well, it was only natural that I suffered some damage from being in the poisonous mist for nearly a minute. I had managed to endure a threat that would have proven fatal for an ordinary human four times over.

“Lightning,” Mia commanded.

Her merciless lightning attack struck the weakened Giant.

And then...

“Stone Blast.”

A barrage of stone bullets rained down upon the Giant's head, delivering the final blow. The creature collapsed to the ground, dissolving away as if melting, leaving behind three blue gems.

Mia and I found ourselves in a white room. Mia had leveled up.

※ ※ ※

“They may be weak, but they're certainly formidable foes,” Mia commented.

We immediately convened a strategy meeting in the white room.

Mia hopped onto my lap as I settled into the chair in front of the PC.

“Hey,” she said.

“Mmm, it's a perk,” I replied.

Mia looked up at me, her lips curling into a faint smile.



She resembled a younger cousin from my extended family, although my cousin was a bit more mischievous.

“We'll increase Kazu's favorability through physical contact,” Mia suggested.

“Don't make it sound like a game,” I replied.

Mia tilted her head to the side. “Wouldn't a CG eroge without censorship be better?”

“I have no idea what you're talking about. I'm a wholesome person,” I retorted.

“Well, if you can't understand with your mind, maybe I'll make you understand with your body,” Mia teased.

I playfully tapped Mia's forehead as we faced each other, but the impact was stronger than I anticipated. Mia winced and held her forehead, tears welling up.

“Does pain count as a form of love?” I mused.

“Yeah, love is love. Anyway, let's get back to the topic,” Mia said.

“Mmm, love is such a vague concept,” I agreed.

I grabbed Mia's shoulder and forcefully turned her around 180 degrees to face the notebook PC.

On the PC monitor, the usual question and skill point allocation windows were displayed.

“That giant is definitely stronger than an elite orc, right?” I asked.

“In terms of experience, it seems to be at least equivalent to 10 orcs. The remaining experience points I need for my level-up are probably around that much.”

Equivalent to 10 orcs... Seriously. Well, it's a giant after all. Dealing with a four-meter-tall brute force attacker is troublesome, so being equal to 10 orcs is too cheap.

“Also, the Silent Field was broken,” Mia added.

“It's the same special ability as the General's,” I noted.

Let's inquire about that as well. I typed on the notebook PC keyboard.

First and foremost, the formal name of the giant was simply “Giant.”

The hobgoblin's formal name was also given as “Hobgoblin.” It seems that if we assign names to them ourselves, they get registered with those names in the system.

“Kazu, what about the Globster?” Mia asked.

“Well, should I give it a try?” I replied.

To cut to the conclusion, they didn't provide me with the official name of the Globster.

It's a small difference, but it's significant.

“Hmm. I want to try naming a monster I've never seen before 'Suzuki Dogezaemon' and see their reaction,” I pondered.

“If you think of it as a 'Beholder' in your mind, wouldn't it be registered as a Beholder?” Mia suggested.

“But I don't want to encounter such a dangerous creature in the first place.”

Then don't say anything...

By the way, a Beholder is a unique monster from the tabletop RPG “Dungeons & Dragons,” characterized by its eyeball-like appearance. In other games, manga, and novels, it has been referred to as Evil Eye or Gazer.

Anyway...

I also inquired about the special ability of dispelling curses possessed by the General and the Giant. Still no response. However, when I asked if it was a skill all high-level monsters possessed, the answer was “No.”

“So, it seems that it's indeed one of their unique abilities. There's no cruel rule where low-level magic is automatically canceled when you level up,” I concluded.

“On the other hand, if we get hit by a binding magic without any countermeasures, we might be in trouble,” I remarked.

Mia nodded in agreement. "If there's someone among the hobgoblins who can use magic, we need to be cautious about that too."

Even if we're cautious, there might be situations where we can't do anything... it feels hopeless.

"Mia, do you have any other questions?" I asked.

"The locals," Mia replied.

Ah, right. I'll ask even though I don't expect an answer.

I inquired about the locals who are currently fighting against the monster troops, as well as information about this town. I didn't have high expectations for a response, but surprisingly, we received one. The name of this town is Hesh Resh Nash, which is the name given by the locals.

"The locals refer to themselves as humanity, and their language is known as the common language. However, we are currently unable to communicate with those who speak the common language."

"This is...,"

"Yeah, something cooperative?" I suggested uncertainly.

Mia and I exchanged puzzled glances.

"Oh, I see."

Suddenly, a question popped into my mind. I asked the computer, "How can we communicate in the common language?"

We received a response that left Mia and me breathless.

"Use the magic prepared for Mia Vendor..."

Mia acted swiftly. She slid off my lap and rushed to Mia Vendor, located at the center of the room, to check the available spells.

"I can't believe it... I can't believe I forgot!" Mia exclaimed in disbelief.

"Who are you referring to as 'I'?" I teased. Mia held her forehead and mimicked an "ouch" pose. Behind her, I glanced at the screen of Mia Vendor.

Indeed, it was there. Many items that didn't exist when I reached level 20 were now available in Mia Vendor. Most of them were irrelevant at the moment, except for one crucial item.

Rank 2 magic, Many Tongues.

It required only 200 tokens, half the amount needed for other rank 2 magics. However, we still didn't have enough tokens at hand.

“Between the two of us, we have about 150 tokens. We obtained 30 tokens from the giant we just defeated...”

“If we defeat one more giant, we'll have enough,” Mia interjected.

In theory, that was true.

The problem was that we would need to level up and return here again.

“Anyway, we can't negotiate with the people here unless we defeat the enemy,” I stated.

Mia nodded in agreement. “That's right, I see...” She had a point. The tasks at hand hadn't changed much. They needed to continue weakening the enemy's forces. The real issue was that they had allowed the enemy to witness their power from the very first monster encounter. This might have alerted the enemy to the presence of formidable opponents among them.

Or did that roar serve as a warning? Even if it was a warning, would the entire enemy army suddenly become cautious and stop attacking...?

“Mia, how do you think the enemy will act from now on?” I asked.

“Will they send a scouting unit?” Mia pondered. “If I had to guess, it would probably consist of around 10 hobgoblins and a giant.”

Well, that sounded about right. Even so... it seemed like it was going to be quite troublesome. *Could they win with their current forces? If it came down to it, I could use my MP to summon an Iron Golem, but...*

“You should conserve your MP, Kazu,” Mia advised, shaking her head. It was true that Mia still had plenty of MP left, while mine was less than half. It would be best if I could save my MP, but...

“If you die, there will be nothing left,” Mia said firmly. “I won't let you die. Basically, we'll divide and conquer.”

Furthermore, Mia looked up at me with a mischievous grin.

“If we launch a counterattack and set up an ambush for the enemy, there's a strategy that you're good at.”

“A pitfall?” I guessed.

Mia nodded.

“We'll set a trap using Earth Pit.”

Mia	
LEVEL: 14	EARTH MAGIC: 4
WIND MAGIC: 5	SKILL POINTS: 3

After asking a few more questions, we returned to the original world. We dispersed the Poison Smog with wind magic and collected tokens. At the corner of the town where the giant had fallen, we quickly prepared for the counterattack. We waited, and after a few minutes, the next wave of enemies arrived.

Chapter 79: Battle in the Fortress City Part 3

The alleyway was only wide enough for two people to walk side by side. The heavy footsteps of the Giant echoed, causing the ground to shake. A 4-meter-tall body appeared around the corner of the building, followed by a group of hobgoblin soldiers with green skin.

That's when Mia and I made our appearance.

There was a distance of about 20 meters between us and them. Before the enemy could notice us, Mia unleashed her magic.

“Stone Bind,” Mia cast her spell, causing the ground beneath the Giant to gain a strong adhesive force, immobilizing it. The Giant let out an angry roar, and the group of hobgoblins noticed our presence and screamed.

Ten hobgoblins, armed with swords and shields, charged at us with tremendous force. I felt the urge to run away, but I resisted with all my strength. As they approached within five meters of us...

Suddenly, the four front-line hobgoblins vanished. A large hole had opened up in the sturdy brick pavement where they had been just moments ago. Mia had already used Earth Pit and concealed the hole with the illusion magic called Refraction, a rank 5 wind magic.

Thanks to the combination of earth and wind magic, an impromptu trap had been created. I didn't need to dig a hole myself, as the magic had taken care of it. The width of the pitfall matched the width of the alleyway, and fortunately, four hobgoblins had fallen into it.

“Poison Smog,” Mia unleashed her magic, releasing a poisonous mist into the hole. The hobgoblins trapped in the pit screamed in agony. The remaining hobgoblins realized they had fallen into a trap and became trapped themselves.

Two Wind Elementals jumped from the roof of an adjacent building, their task being to create chaos and drop as many enemies as possible into the pit.

Additionally, two hobgoblins fell into the trap.

The narrow road worked in their favor, as the hobgoblins were stuck. No matter how disciplined they were, this kind of attack was unexpected for them.

“Mia, pursue them,” I commanded.

“Leave it to me. Whirlwind. Lightning,” Mia unleashed her magic attacks, slightly lifted by flying. The whirlwind blocked the hobgoblins' retreat, and lightning struck them repeatedly in succession.

It appeared to be an easy victory, but time was against us. The immobilized Giant, about ten meters away, could break free at any moment. Could they dispose of these hobgoblins before that happened?

Just as the remaining four hobgoblins were about to fall into the pit, I leveled up. That meant I had gained experience points only from the six that fell into the trap.

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“Well, then,” I said as I sat down in a white room, facing the PC right away. After obtaining Mia's approval, I proceeded to level up my summoning magic.

“Now, the real preparations are finally complete,” I thought to myself. However, I still couldn't buy the Many Tongues magic because I couldn't pick up the gems from defeated enemies. But for now, the priority was to deal with the enemies in front of us.

KAZUHISA	
LEVEL: 22	SUPPORT MAGIC: 5
SUMMONING MAGIC: 6→7	SKILL POINTS: 8→1

We returned to the original location on the battlefield immediately.

※ ※ ※

Mia released lightning from above once again, taking down one of the hobgoblins. “These guys aren't very tough,” she commented, shooting another hobgoblin with lightning, causing it to sink in a sea of blue blood. Mia leveled up here.

※ ※ ※

“Hm, I see. I leveled up on the eighth hobgoblin,” Mia said as we sat in the white room, calculating the experience points. We defeated eight hobgoblins.

“The experience points are probably about the same as four orcs,” Mia estimated, and I agreed. There was no mistaking it. Calculating experience points for a large number of enemies was relatively easy.

Mia decided to save her skill points for now and prioritize ranking up Wind Magic to 6.

Mia	
LEVEL: 15	EARTH MAGIC: 4
WIND MAGIC: 5	SKILL POINTS: 5

We returned to our original location.

※ ※ ※

Two hobgoblins remained. However, at this point, the two were cooperating and attempting to break through the wall of wind created by the whirlwind behind them. While one drew the attention of the Wind Elemental, the other held up a shield and charged into the gust.

Despite being battered and torn by the resistance of the wind, one of the hobgoblins managed to stagger to the other side. Just at that moment, the giant

crushed the foothold it had been clinging to.

The hobgoblin shouted something and gave instructions to the giant. The giant nodded with a growl... and then turned around and fled. It seemed like it was in a panic.

"This is bad. If it were just the hobgoblins, that would be one thing, but if we send the giant back to our main force..." I started to panic, but Mia came down and grabbed my hand.

"Pursue," I said, and Mia took off using her Fly spell, chasing after the fleeing giant. I had previously cast Mighty Arm on Mia to support our combined weight during flight, although it did slow us down a bit.

"Kazu, I'll leave the rest to you," Mia called out to me.

"Got it!" I responded, readying myself for what was to come.

Mia cast Fly on me, and I was sent flying forward. I screamed and spun around like a top, desperately trying to adjust my flight direction. We passed over the heads of the two remaining hobgoblins and caught up to the giant.

"Summon Centaur Knight," I commanded.

Beneath me, a male familiar appeared. He had the lower half of a horse and the upper half of a muscular body. He carried a lance in his right hand, a shield in his left, a spare sword at his waist, and a bow and quiver on his back. He wore a suit of metal armor and a full-face helmet.

The Centaur Knight ran alongside me at breakneck speed, despite both of us being affected by the Fly spell. He seemed to have room to spare. "Take down that giant!" I ordered.

The Centaur Knight yelled something I didn't understand and charged toward the giant, quickly closing the distance between them. With a powerful jump, he collided with the giant's back, piercing its heart with his sharp lance. The giant screamed in agony and fell face down. The Centaur Knight threw away his lance and drew his sword, delivering a fatal blow to the giant's neck. Blood spurted from the giant's throat as its body collapsed.

Meanwhile, I lost control of my flight magic and crashed into a building's wall. It hurt, really badly. I didn't sustain any major injuries, but my back was scraped and my skin torn. Nonetheless, I managed to stand up and turn around to see that two Wind Elementals had taken care of the remaining two hobgoblins. Somehow, we were able to defeat all the enemies.

The answer was already in the Q&A that the four types of elementals were not affected by poison. Therefore, the poison mist had disappeared, but the gems in the hole were entrusted to the Wind Elementals just in case. Each hobgoblin dropped five red gems, so with ten hobgoblins and one giant, we collected 80 tokens from this battle. Our total tokens now amounted to 260, which meant we could buy Many Tongues.

The problem was that both Mia and I had just leveled up, so we couldn't use Mia Vendor without going to the white room. We would have to wait for the next level up to access it.

"Think about it the other way, Kazu. There are still a lot of enemies, so think of it as unlimited level ups," Mia reassured me.

"That's a very positive way of thinking," I replied.

In reality, we had to maintain a positive mindset to keep up with the large number of enemies ahead. There were still four giants and at least 150 hobgoblins to deal with. Additionally, there were at least five Mage Hobgoblins who could use Fire Magic Rank 3, along with other wolf-like monsters we hadn't encountered yet. The challenges were far from over.

"The most troublesome thing is the hobgoblins' high degree of cooperation," I remarked. "Although they failed this time, they will try to cooperate and fight in a crisis. Even if they sacrifice themselves, they will try to win as a military force. They are very dangerous opponents for the two of us who are alone."

"Right. We shouldn't expect the next battle to go smoothly," Mia agreed.

We were both aware of the challenges we faced. With our limited numbers, we needed to take the initiative and keep the enemies busy. Tempo Ado, maintaining a fast pace, was crucial.

“Anyway, we have to grab the enemies' attention and keep them busy,” I emphasized.

“Tempo Ado is important,” Mia added.

Despite being elite fighters, we couldn't afford to underestimate the hobgoblins. Their cooperation and strategic mindset made them formidable opponents. We couldn't stay in one place for too long, opting for hit-and-run tactics instead.

Chapter 80: Battle of the Fortress City Part 4

Moving forward without rest, we climbed to the roof of a two-story building to observe the situation. The remaining four giants were advancing toward the area we had just been in, destroying obstacles and widening the road. Neat formations of hobgoblins were likely following closely behind the giants.

"I'm glad we're not continuing to intercept them in that area," I remarked.

"Right. Hit and run. We can't stay in one place for too long," Mia agreed.

We took a moment to breathe a sigh of relief before focusing on our next strategy.

"We want to divide and conquer, but..." I began.

"Right. If the locals could make a reckless assault, we could use that as a decoy," Mia suggested.

We recalled the individual who had expressed a desire to become a hero. She possessed a game-like rational thinking when it came to strategizing, replacing emotional involvement. It was a reliable trait. If she became too focused on rationality, I knew I could bring her back to balance with a conversation. We complemented each other's weaknesses.

"If we can cooperate with the locals, it might be a little easier," I said.

"To do that, we need Many Tongues... and I just need to level up," Mia responded.

For me to use Mia Vendor, I needed to level up and access the white room. The next one to level up was Mia. Roughly calculating the experience points, there should be about three or four hobgoblins left.

Suddenly, movement caught our attention within the enemy army. The howling of a wolf echoed, and a gray creature sped towards us through a narrow alley.

“That creature we saw briefly in the distance,” I noted.

If that wolf-like monster was chasing us due to our scent, we had to defeat it here and now, or it would hinder our future strategy. Mia and I descended to the ground, preparing for interception.

We cast three types of enhancement magic on the Centaur Knight we had just summoned: Keen Weapon, Physical Up, and Mighty Arm. Keen Weapon worked on spears, swords, and bows, and according to the Q&A, it could be applied to the bow itself, strengthening all arrows fired from it. We decided to conserve our MP for now, only using these enhancements. Depending on the situation, we might summon another Centaur Knight.

As we turned the corner of the building, two larger-than-life monsters with gray fur, resembling wolves, appeared before us. Their shining red eyes and the bluish-white light emanating from their bodies indicated their power. The monsters let out a loud howl, their hair standing on end.

Realizing the danger, I quickly summoned the Wind Elemental and positioned it in front of us. Without hesitation, the wolf-like monsters charged at the Wind Elemental.

“Did they warp?” I questioned.

“Hmm. It seems like they're just incredibly fast,” Mia observed.

In the blink of an eye, they closed a distance of approximately 15 meters. The charging wolves collided with the Wind Elemental, causing it to emit a scream in a woman's voice. However, the familiars managed to intercept the charging monsters, protecting their master by restraining the wolves with their bodies. The wolves crackled with electricity, suggesting they possessed a special ability to transform into lightning to quickly close distances.

“If that's the case, it shouldn't be very effective against the Wind Elemental. Fortunately, the Wind Elemental has a constant resistance to the element of wind. It seems all the elementals possess resistance to their respective elements,” Mia deduced.

Despite its resistance, the Wind Elemental had suffered considerable damage. It was evident that these monsters possessed significant power. We couldn't

afford to miss this opportunity to defeat them.

Acting swiftly, I commanded the Centaur Knight to attack. Unsheathing his sword, the Centaur Knight swiftly moved past the charging wolves, slashing them both in half with a single strike.

It was an incredible display of swordsmanship. With just one swing of his sword, the Centaur Knight had successfully dispatched the two wolf-like monsters. His skills were on par with Rank 5 swordsmanship, surpassing even elite orcs.

The defeated monsters vanished, leaving behind a blue gem each.

“Hmm, let's level up,” Mia announced.

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In the white room, we stood before Mia Vendor, ready to purchase Many Tongues now that we had the required tokens.

“What should we do? Should Mia learn this? We still seem to have plenty of MP left,” I contemplated.

Mia shook her head.

“Kazu is our leader. He should learn this magic,” she insisted.

I understood her point. As the leader, it made sense for me to acquire Many Tongues.

According to the information provided, Many Tongues has a duration of 24 hours and is unaffected by level ups or skill ranks. Considering this, I pondered what I should give up in order to learn this magic.

“Summon Puppet Golem, maybe we don't need it anymore...” I suggested.

“A familiar that only fights won't be able to keep up with inflation. It may have good fuel efficiency, but...” Mia added.

“Rank 2 monsters are really something else...” I mused.

While the Rank 1 crow familiar was still proving useful, the Rank 3 wolf familiar might still have its uses. However, the Rank 2 wolf familiar seemed less

necessary.

“So, does this mean we can finally communicate with the people of this world?” I pondered aloud.

Mia blushed deliberately, and I chose to ignore her playful gesture.

“Well, shall we return to the battlefield?” I proposed.

“Kazu, there's one more thing,” Mia interjected.

“What is it?” I inquired.

“The next enemy will likely be approaching soon. We need to decide whether to intercept or retreat.”

Ah, I understood. The enemy's original plan was probably for the wolves to launch a surprise attack, followed by reinforcements overwhelming us. However, our military strength had surpassed their expectations. We had successfully annihilated the wolves sent as vanguards and as a means to hinder our progress. As a result...

“We might be able to defeat them individually,” I speculated.

“Maybe,” Mia agreed.

At least, we didn't hear any sounds of approaching giants. Even if there were many hobgoblins, we believed we could manage somehow.

“I'll focus on strengthening my wind magic, providing us with more means of support,” Mia suggested.

“Ah, at Wind Rank 6, there's Lightning Arrow, right?” I recalled.

Lightning Arrow was a direct attack magic, the first of its kind since Rank 3 Lightning in the wind attribute. It was similar to Flame Arrow, a Rank 2 fire magic that shot one arrow of flame per rank.

At Rank 6, Lightning Arrow finally reached a similar level to Rank 2 fire magic, which was known for its proficiency in direct attacks. Perhaps wind wasn't the most suitable element for direct attacks, but the power per arrow in Lightning Arrow was significantly higher than Flame Arrow, making it almost certain to

hit. Additionally, it could target separate enemies with its lightning arrows, making it highly effective against numerous weaker foes.

“We have the option to retreat, but should we seize the opportunity to thin out the enemy's forces?” I pondered.

“Hmm, for now, we still have some room to maneuver,” Mia deliberated.

Carefully considering various possibilities, we discussed and planned our strategies, weighing different scenarios and making choices accordingly. We would adapt our response based on how the enemy appeared.

After finalizing our plan, Mia decided to raise her skill level, staying with Earth Magic at level 4 and increasing her Wind Magic from level 5 to 6. Her remaining skill points decreased from 7 to 1. With a press of the Enter key, we returned to the original world.

Back in the back alley, we positioned ourselves and prepared for the enemy's attack. The narrow path where the wolves had appeared before seemed like a probable route for their approach. And just as we anticipated, two hobgoblins emerged from that path, wielding shields and leaping towards us. They spotted us at a distance of about 10 meters and let out a warning shout.

In an instant, one of the hobgoblins received an arrow in the throat and fell to the ground. It was an impressive shot from the centaur knight, displaying his skill with a bow and arrow. At that very moment, I leveled up. There was no need for discussion. We immediately returned to our original location.

Now at level 23, my stats were as follows:

KAZU	
LEVEL: 23	SUPPORT MAGIC: 5
SUMMONING MAGIC: 7	SKILL POINTS: 3

The remaining hobgoblin, witnessing his comrade's defeat, attempted to retreat back into the narrow path. However, he was struck in the thigh by

another arrow from the centaur knight as he lowered his shield. The hobgoblin screamed and writhed in pain. We listened attentively, but no further enemies made their appearance. Did they consider a direct attack too risky?

Suddenly, it dawned on me that I could have understood their warning shouts if I had utilized Many Tongues. I berated myself internally for overlooking such a simple solution. I bit my lip in frustration.

“Kazucchi, there's no use in regretting now. Focus on the battle,” Mia scolded, snapping me out of my self-reproach.

She was right. I would reflect on my oversight later. For now, I cast Many Tongues on myself.

Just then, the hobgoblin on the ground received another arrow from the centaur knight's pursuit and let out a final, dying scream.

“Glory to Galga Nigu! Hail the Demon King's Army!” the hobgoblin shouted in its last breath.

Demon King's Army? Wait, what? Are you guys from that kind of faction?

Chapter 81: Battle of the Fortress City Part 5

The mention of the Demon King's army, uttered just as Many Tongues took effect, referred to them. It sent a chill down my spine, as if I had stumbled upon something truly foreboding. The concept of a Demon King... What era were we in? It felt like we had been transported into a world reminiscent of Dragon Quest or a similar fantasy setting.

How on earth did Many Tongues translate this? I needed to take a moment to calm down and gather my thoughts.

As I pondered the meaning of the term “Demon King's army,” I considered the possibility that it was a name coined by someone based on their observations or encounters. It could be a result of the translation mechanism in our PCs, similar to how local monster names are replaced with recognizable terms. Perhaps someone had exclaimed, “What the hell is this, the Demon King's army?!” when they first encountered the group, and the name stuck.

Regardless of the origin of the name, I didn't want to jump to conclusions and assume the existence of an actual Demon King. The concept seemed far-fetched and brought about thoughts of potential dangers in a world where such a figure existed. I couldn't help but make a weird face at the mere thought of it, catching Mia's attention.

Realizing that dwelling on the possibility of a Demon King was unproductive, I refocused my attention on the immediate issues at hand. The current situation was dangerous, and it seemed prudent to consider retreating. After a moment of hesitation, Mia made a decision and cast the Fly spell on herself and the Centaur Knight.

Understanding the advantage in mobility that Fly provided, I opted to rely on the Centaur Knight to carry me since I wasn't adept at flying myself. I expressed my reliance on the Centaur Knight, and it assured me, “Leave it to me, master.” With that, I hopped onto its back.

Mia and the Centaur Knight took flight into the air, accompanied by two Wind Elementals. I marveled at how much more skilled my familiar was at flying compared to me. However, amidst the astonishment, I thought I heard a deep voice.

Wait, did the Centaur Knight just speak?

I looked at its face, covered by a full-face helmet, as its red eyes met mine. Curiosity got the better of me, and I asked, "Is it thanks to Many Tongues?"

"That is correct, master," the Centaur Knight replied.

So, up until now, I had been able to communicate telepathically with birds and similar creatures, but I couldn't hold conversations with other familiars at all. This indicated that these familiars had their own language.

Well, now that I could converse with them like this, it made me hesitate to treat them as mere disposable pawns.

As the Centaur Knight read my thoughts and addressed the nature of their physical bodies being avatars, I acknowledged his words with a simple "Got it." It seemed that my previous discussions about using the familiars as disposable pawns had caught their attention, prompting their consideration.

I appreciated the Centaur Knight's thoughtful reminder. It was important not to let my guard down or allow my thoughts to become dulled in unfamiliar territory. They were indeed convenient pieces that could be used and discarded, but thinking of them in that way was necessary to protect what truly mattered.

Turning my attention to the Wind Elementals, I realized that they were capable of speech after all. It seemed like I had a hunch about it. This newfound ability added significant tactical value.

I instructed the Wind Elementals to split up and monitor the enemy's movements by moving along the rooftops, one on each side. They promptly followed my orders and scattered accordingly.

Mia looked at me and requested Many Tongues as well. I realized that it would be beneficial to cast the spell on her too. With Many Tongues in effect, Mia immediately engaged in conversation with the Centaur Knight.

“Do you prefer women with big breasts or big butts?” Mia asked, catching me off guard.

“Hey now, you don't have to answer that,” I interjected, feeling slightly uncomfortable with the question.

Mia clicked her tongue and changed the subject. “Then, Ken-chan, how much do you know about this world? If you know about this town...”

Ken-chan? Well, it was fine, but her question hit a sensitive spot. The Centaur Knight replied, “Unfortunately, I do not exist in this world. If necessary, I will explain more later.”

Mia pondered for a moment and asked another question. “Can you be summoned again as the same individual?”

“In my current state, it is not certain that the next summoned Centaur Knight will be me,” the Centaur Knight responded.

Mia noted his mention of “current state” and inquired further.

“You said, 'In my current state.' Is there a way to summon the same individual again?”

“It would be possible to make a dedicated contract, but I do not know that method,” the Centaur Knight explained.

“I see...” Mia mused. Her line of questioning was quite impressive, resembling an idea from a game. She had uncovered a concept that hadn't crossed my mind.

What exactly was a dedicated contract? However, for now, it seemed unlikely that we could establish such contracts. If we could summon the same familiar multiple times, it would be easier to share information and prove highly useful. Perhaps it could be a topic for future research. But for now, our focus was on intercepting the hobgoblins ahead.

From the rooftop of the building we climbed, we observed that the hobgoblins had split into two narrow passages, attempting to encircle us.

As the hobgoblins below started communicating and attempted to climb onto the roofs of other buildings, it became clear that the enemy wanted to shoot us

down with arrows. Approximately 20 hobgoblins were heading towards us. However, one particular comment among their chatter caught our attention—they mentioned calling in the “Injutai.”

Curious about the meaning of “Injutai,” I asked Mia for her thoughts. She jokingly replied, “A lewd beast... oh, sorry, I pulled your ear. If you think about the meaning of the word and translate it into Japanese... it could be something like 'Shadow Curse Squad.'” Though I didn't fully comprehend it, I got the general idea.

Wondering if the Injutai could be a wizard, I voiced my speculation to Mia. She agreed, saying, “Probably... that's why, Kazu.” It seemed she was cautioning me about the potential threat.

Based on our reconnaissance, we had some knowledge of the magic the enemy wizard might employ. We should be particularly wary of the fire magic that was previously used against humans outside the city walls.

Just then, the Wind Elementals returned, providing their report. “We didn't see any ambushes around us,” they informed us. I expressed my gratitude for their valuable information.

Recognizing the imminent danger, I cast defensive spells. “Deflection Spell... Resist Elements: Fire.” It was crucial not to skimp on MP in this situation, ensuring everyone had fire resistance. Although the Orc mages might possess various elemental abilities, fire attacks were generally more destructive. If they were to use earth magic, we could counter with Heat Metal.

Our heightened alertness proved to be the right decision. Shortly after reinforcing our fire defenses, a barrage of flaming arrows rained down from a distance, scorching the Wind Elementals who were positioned slightly higher than us. Thanks to the Resist Elements spell, the Wind Elementals suffered only minor injuries.

We quickly identified the source of the attack—four robed figures standing on rooftops over 30 meters away. “Mages?” I pondered. We couldn't afford to waste time. In that case...

“Centaur Knight, let's charge in and sweep them out,” I commanded. The Centaur Knight acknowledged, “Understood, sir.” With me on its back, the

Centaur Knight skillfully guided his flying mount and charged towards the robed figures. Desperately concentrating their flaming arrows, the mages attempted to fend us off, but the Centaur Knight's resilient body remained unaffected. In fact, the Centaur Knight unsheathed his sword and effortlessly sliced through the arrows of flame. It was astonishing to witness—magic being cut. Perhaps it was due to his Resist Elements: Fire ability.

As we closed the distance, one of the mages threw a Fire Bomb at us—a magical grenade that exploded upon impact, causing widespread damage. Unlike a regular grenade, it had a longer range. However, just before the fireball could explode in front of the Centaur Knight, he hurled his sword. The sword cleaved through the fireball, causing it to dissipate with a whoosh. Continuing on its trajectory, the thrown sword struck the chest of one of the robed figures who had cast the magic attack.

I observe as the person in the robe cowers in panic, narrowly avoiding the sword that passed above them.

“Damn, they dodged it. But thanks to that, the robe came off,” I remark.

As the robe falls away, I see a green-skinned, hairless creature with a flat face, a flattened nose, sharp pointed ears, and a wide mouth that is ripped horizontally. Their orange-colored eyes stare back at me.

Based on their appearance, I deduce that this is a Mage Hobgoblin. The previous Hobgoblins wore helmets that concealed their faces, but now I can see the distinct features of this creature.

The remaining three mages, realizing the danger, leap high into the air to maintain distance and attempt to escape to another building. Their ability to perform a high jump suggests they may also possess wind magic.

This is a precarious situation. Even I would be seriously hurt if struck by lightning or a similar attack. Well, I'm convinced it would only be “a little painful” in the end, but... The Centaur Knight wields his lance and impales the Hobgoblin directly in front of him. The mage screams and goes limp, their body relaxing.

As the humanoid monster vanishes, a single blue gem drops to the ground. Immediately afterward, the three mages who had scattered unleash a

continuous barrage of lightning towards me. Did they mistake me for their commander or something? Damn it! Sharp pain courses through my chest, shoulders, and arms, causing my body to stiffen.

Despite the agony, I manage to cling on while on horseback, desperately holding onto the Centaur Knight. Damn it! "Wind Elementals!" I command. The Wind Elementals, who have been following me, heed my orders and launch an attack on the mages to the left and right. The mages attempt to flee, but we are faster.

The Centaur Knight turns to face one of the Wind Elementals that is not being pursued and charges towards it. The mage desperately hurls lightning at me, but I somehow endure it. My teeth are chattering, and pain courses through me, but I am still alive. "Don't underestimate my level 23 hit points!"

And once we defeat these mages...

The Centaur Knight closes in on the second Mage Hobgoblin and dispatches them. Two Wind Elementals arrive a little later and take down the remaining mages. All four mages have been eliminated.

The Centaur Knight retrieves a sword that had fallen onto the roof. I breathe heavily and relax my grip, feeling the pain, but relieved that we managed to defeat the enemy's wizards. Looking ahead, this is a significant advantage.

Chapter 82: Battle in the Fortress City - Part 6

Although the mages have been dealt with, the dispersed hobgoblins have now fully focused their attention on us. Arrows rain down from all directions. Furthermore, Mia and I find ourselves separated, with a distance of over 50 meters between us.

“Descend for now! Protect Mia and follow her orders! Let's regroup...”

From the back of the centaur knight, I surveyed the surroundings and noticed a pier on the north end of the town, situated on the opposite side. I was surprised to realize that there was a river in this town. Upon closer inspection, it became apparent that the river had dried up long ago, and a wall had been constructed on the other side of the pier. The north wall appeared to be relatively new, with less moss covering it. It seemed likely that the defenses on that side were more robust, which could explain why the hobgoblins hadn't attacked from that direction.

Considering this, it might be a good idea to regroup at the pier. However, since we were currently under the effects of Many Tongues, we couldn't communicate specific words without alerting the enemy.

“Mia, I'll tell you the meeting point once we level up!” I relayed my plan to Mia.

“Got it,” she responded.

The Wind Elementals flew over to Mia, and she began explaining the details to them. Meanwhile, I gave instructions to the centaur knight, and we landed in a random alleyway.

“Head north. Along the way, I want to take down two hobgoblins,” I commanded.

“Understood, Master. Hold on tight and don't fall off,” the centaur knight acknowledged.

As instructed, I clung tightly to the back of the centaur knight. He charged forward with determination, swiftly turning corners and entering a relatively wide street.

One of the hobgoblins on a rooftop had its back turned towards us, seemingly unaware of our presence. The centaur knight skillfully hooked his lance onto his waist, and I swiftly handed him my bow and arrows from his back.

“Thank you, my lord,” the half-human, half-beast warrior expressed his gratitude as he pulled back the bowstring and released the arrow.

The arrow found its mark, piercing through the hobgoblin's left eye and instantly killing it.

“Well done!” I exclaimed, impressed by the centaur knight's accuracy.

The centaur knight snorted proudly before retrieving another arrow from his quiver and accelerating. I held on tightly to his back, ready for the next challenge.



Just as we turned into another street, a hobgoblin hiding in the shadows, about 10 meters away, revealed itself and attempted to shoot an arrow at us. However, our swift movement made it miss widely. In response, the centaur knight retaliated with his own arrow, which ricocheted off the hobgoblin's helmet. The impact seemed to disorient the hobgoblin, causing it to drop its weapon and fall to its knees, likely suffering from a mild concussion. Without hesitation, the centaur knight charged forward and crushed the hobgoblin's head with his front legs, resulting in a sickening sound of bones cracking as its body lifted up lightly. We didn't slow down, continuing our journey.

Suddenly, we found ourselves in a white room, shielded from eavesdropping or interference. Here, I revealed to Mia that our meeting place would be the pier.

"The pier..." Mia tilted her head in confusion.

"Even though the river is gone, the town still exists?" she questioned.

"During aerial reconnaissance, I noticed a river further north. It's possible they diverted the river's course as it's difficult to defend with a river cutting through. But that raises concerns about water supply during a siege," I pondered aloud, contemplating the potential reasons behind such a decision.

Mia considered my words and then asked, "Can you summon water?"

"Ah, right. If we have magic, we could ensure our safety even during a siege," I replied, realizing that there might be things beyond our world's common sense. In this world, it wouldn't be strange if people could summon water or other necessities. I recalled a mountain to the east where water used to flow from, but perhaps circumstances had changed, rendering it unnecessary. It was all speculation, of course.

"Hey, Kazu. I know it's late, but can you summon your familiars now? I want to ask them some things," Mia requested.

"Ah, yeah. I also want to hear their stories," I agreed.

After considering which familiars to summon, I cast the newly learned rank 7 Summon Servant Team magic. To my surprise, a group of 100 butlers and maids appeared before us, dressed in elegant attire.

“Isn't this too many?!” I exclaimed involuntarily, feeling overwhelmed by their numbers.

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The white room, about the size of a classroom, became cramped with so many people. Fortunately, it seemed that as long as the required number of people remained behind, the others could be sent back. Regrettably, three butlers and three maids were chosen to return home, leaving six individuals to answer our questions.

Curiously, I asked them, “Where were you summoned from, and what happens when you die?”

The butler responded politely, “We familiars are beings with temporary bodies and souls. We don't usually exist in any specific place.”

Mia murmured, “It's like Fate's thing, isn't it?” I wasn't entirely sure what she meant by “thing,” but I had a general understanding.

“Can I ask a question too?” Mia asks.

“Sure, everyone, please answer Mia's question.”

“Maid-san over there, if Kazu wants to have sex, is it okay to offer sexual services?”

“Yes, of course...” I lightly tapped Mia's head and told the maid not to answer such questions.

“You really are...”

“I'm just voicing what Kazu wants to know.”

“Unfortunately, that's not necessary at the moment.”

I couldn't help but feel relieved that Arisu and Tamaki weren't present in the room. The situation was already awkward enough, especially considering there were two women present who had been in a relationship with me.

Upon hearing the maid's answer about the exclusive contract, I couldn't help but feel a flutter of excitement, but I quickly refocused my attention on more

pressing matters. Unfortunately, the familiars had no knowledge of this world or how to obtain the contract formula. It seemed that they were unable to provide us with the information we sought.

Moving on, I inquired if the butlers and maids were capable of fighting against enemies. Their response was disheartening—they had not learned any combat techniques and would be of no use in a fight. It became clear that their strengths lay in tasks such as cleaning and physical work, rather than combat. Thus, summoning all 100 of them at once would be impractical.

Taking this into consideration, it was best not to summon them for combat since they had acknowledged their limitations in that area. As rank 7 familiars, their summoning cost was 49 MP, leaving me curious about the purpose that would require such a significant MP expenditure. Perhaps it was solely for luxurious use in the white room. On a related note, the Summon Feast, a rank 7 magic set that accompanied the Summon Servant Team, provided a lavish party set for 100 people, including a luxurious table, chairs, food, and drinks, all for just 7 MP. It was an intriguing combination of butlers, maids, and a party set, showcasing the diversity of rank 7 magic summoning.

Setting the familiars aside for now, I instructed them to standby while Mia and I discussed our next course of action. We contemplated pursuing the enemy, knowing that their battle line would likely be stretched thin. However, we had to be cautious, considering the potential arrival of remaining giants.

“Don't go too deep... The remaining giants might arrive soon,” Mia warned.

“If there's only one giant, we'll defeat it. If there are two, we'll stop one. But if there are three or more, we'll retreat,” I proposed, weighing the risks and assessing our capabilities.

We needed to strike a balance between pressing forward and preserving our own safety. With this plan in mind, Mia and I prepared ourselves for the challenges that lay ahead.

That seems reasonable. After all, we need to thin them out using guerrilla tactics.

“I wonder if the soldiers in town or those who gathered in the center are still safe.”

“I hope they'll act as decoys.”

Look at this, everyone. These are the words of someone who just said she wants to become a hero.

This girl seriously lacks heroism.

Mia looks at me with a sidelong glance. Perhaps she understood the meaning of my gaze, as she puffs up her cheeks and looks away.

“After all, my character has low morality.”

“It's okay to be Machiavellian in this situation. At least that means you're doing everything in your power to save my life.”

Mia smiles shyly and says, “Okay, let's go with that.”

Mia	
LEVEL: 17	EARTH MAGIC: 4
WIND MAGIC: 6	SKILL POINTS: 3

Mia presses the enter key, and we return to the town in the midst of a deadly battle.

Chapter 83: Battle in the Fortress City - Part 7

The centaur knight carrying me rushes through a town teeming with enemies. Here and there, I see locals lying on the ground, bearing deep arrow and sword wounds inflicted by hobgoblins. Occasionally, I spot someone still twitching or moaning in pain. But I ignore them. We don't have any healers with us, nor do we intend to acquire healing magic. I can use my own magic to heal my familiar, and if it's just a scratch, I can endure it.

The pain from the earlier lightning strike wasn't as severe as I anticipated. It hurt, but I can still tolerate it. As a level 20 or higher, I now surpass the average general in strength. Though I may not be fully aware of it, I am growing tougher, surpassing the limits of an ordinary human.

Skill points are our lifeline for survival in this world. Each skill point we possess is dedicated to protecting our comrades. My granting magic and summoning magic serve the purpose of aiding my comrades. That's why I remain indifferent even when people who aren't our allies are injured or killed. Mia and I agreed on this, and by now, Mia, who has taken a different route, is likely doing the same.

That's fine. By caring for each other, we can maintain a strong resolve. If we are to help others, we must first ensure the safety of our comrades. Among the corpses, I notice children smaller than Mia. They have been shot in the back with arrows. Nearby lies a quiver containing about 10 arrows. Perhaps they were attempting to pass the quiver to a soldier and were struck by a stray arrow.

I command the Centaur Knight to halt and pick up the quiver of arrows.

"Let's do some archery and shoot down those hobgoblins!" I declare.

"Understood, my lord," replied the Centaur Knight, and he resumed running. I bit my lip hard, tasting the metallic tang of blood. The tremors on the Centaur

Knight's back were intense. Damn it. I clenched my fists, feeling the anger welling up inside me.

“My lord, there are two enemies on the roof to our left,” informed the Centaur Knight.

“Kill them.”

From a strategic standpoint, we could have ignored them, but I couldn't bring myself to give such an order. The Centaur Knight obeyed my command and swiftly dispatched both hobgoblins with a single shot. It was a remarkable display of skill. Despite the hobgoblins having their bows ready, they were struck in the throat and chest before they could loose their arrows. They fell silently to the ground.

We didn't have the luxury of time to search for valuables. The Centaur Knight glanced briefly at his fallen foes as we passed by. I dared not look back, fearing the sight of the dead child's face.

At the designated meeting point on the pier, Mia's figure came into view. The two Wind Elementals seemed to have followed her instructions and stood guard, protecting her. Mia wasn't alone. Three boys and girls, around the same age as her (approximately 10 to 12 years old), stood beside her. All the children trembled in fear.

“Kazu.” Mia turned around, her expression filled with sadness, and spoke to me as I rode on the Centaur Knight. “It seems these kids have escaped.”

“Escaped?”

“From the large mansion at the center of the town. It's surrounded by sturdy walls and appears to belong to the lord. The townspeople had taken refuge there. But... why did they flee from there?”

As one of the boys noticed my confusion, he hesitantly spoke up, saying, “The knight... he fled. However, the water mage is currently obstructing the dam in the mountains. It won't be long before a significant amount of water floods the town.”

Who is this knight they're talking about? Could it be me? It's true that I'm riding on the Centaur Knight, but what do their words mean?

“A water attack?” After contemplating for a moment, it finally dawned on me.

“The reason they no longer need water is because of the ongoing flood caused by the water mage.”

“Yeah. The people who remained in this town are bait for the monsters.”

“And we fell right into their trap.”

It feels like I'm starting to grasp the disturbing occurrences in this town.

The main force of the Lord's army is situated in the eastern mountains, holding back the water with a dam. A water mage, who serves under the Lord, controls the amassed water, causing a flood to engulf the town. This flood is meant to exterminate the besieging monsters. These children, townspeople, and soldiers acting as decoys are sacrificial pawns necessary for the Lord's weaker army. Considering the strength of the giants and the inability of the soldiers to contend with them, this tactic might actually be... a clever strategy.

I mean, if they're destined to lose anyway and everyone is going to be killed by monsters, using them as decoys might be their only option. It's a horrifying situation, but they have no other choice. They'll lose everything if they don't succeed. They can't afford to hesitate. I understand that. I understand it all too well.

Until yesterday, we were in the same predicament. We've always been forced to make the agonizing decision of who to save and who to abandon. In fact, we've had to abandon people on numerous occasions. We survived those two days by gradually building our strength while the orcs were preoccupied. I will never forget that. I will never forget that some people became sacrifices because of choices I made.

However, despite all that, I still want to say this:

“Mia, the people in this town are not our comrades.” Mia gasps and looks up at me from horseback.

“I'm terrified of losing my comrades. Especially you, Mia.”

“Kazu-chan...” Mia tightly bites her lip.

I respond with a warm smile.

“Mia, answer me. Do you still want to help them?”

Mia appears perplexed and averts her gaze. It's clear that she recognizes the inherent hypocrisy in the question. Not only her, but also the individuals waiting for us at the Cultural Arts Center, knowingly exposing themselves to danger, are aware of the truth.

What will happen after we aid the people abandoned by the lord? Will we bring them along with us? Or will we forever bear the responsibility of protecting them?

Yet, despite these uncertainties, I will pose the question to her. “Mia, earlier you mentioned your desire to become a hero.”

“I did, but...” Mia hesitates, torn between reason and emotion.

Her ideal self versus her real self. She grapples with the two conflicting aspects of her identity.

The girl who was in elementary school just six months ago clenches her small fists and gazes downward. Her shoulders tremble ever so slightly.

Mia is intelligent, perhaps too intelligent to be a hero.

A hero is someone who accomplishes the impossible. Someone who presses forward with recklessness.

But that's merely gambling. It's a foolish act, relying on ignorance and recklessness to surmount insurmountable obstacles.

The wiser one is, the less tolerance they have for such a plan, especially when it involves more than just their own life.

“Well, if she can't decide right now...” I shrug my shoulders and shift my gaze to the Centaur Knight.

“Attack, kill.”

“Understood, master.”

The Centaur Knight nocks an arrow onto his bow. Mia and the boys widen their eyes in surprise.

The arrow fired by the Centaur Knight finds its mark in the chest of the hobgoblin advancing from behind cover. Two other hobgoblins had stealthily closed in. Abandoning his bow, the Centaur Knight charges at the other hobgoblin, wielding a lance fastened to his waist. With a single powerful strike, he impales the fleeing hobgoblin through its chest.

I just leveled up! That's fantastic news. It should also give Mia some breathing room to consider her options.

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In a white room, Kazu and Mia sat facing each other, studying each other's expressions. Mia offered a slight smile.

“Thanks, Kazu.”

“You're welcome... So, Mia, shall we discuss various matters?”

“Hmm... Whether or not we should abandon those children?”

“That's one aspect, but also how we should navigate future situations, including the water attack information.”

We possess the ability to fly using magic. If necessary, we can simply take to the skies. If Mia wants to assist a group of three individuals, we can even fly them out with us. However, we can't be certain if these three people hold the information we seek. If we wish to uncover the truth, we may need to seek out adults who are in positions of command among the soldiers. They might possess more comprehensive knowledge.

“Come to think of it, we might not need to rely on the townspeople's accounts.”

“Huh? Why is that?”

“But there are individuals obstructing the water in the East Mountains. If they hold authority, it's likely they are aligned with us.”

Remaining in this town is akin to a form of self-destruction. It's difficult to fathom that those in charge would willingly subject themselves to such a cruel

plan. Well, perhaps it could be seen as a way to avoid taking responsibility by perishing alongside the town, but it lacks the strength of character.

We have endured through hell until just the day before yesterday. We have weathered countless hardships by gritting our teeth and persevering. If a commander were to take their own life, it could only be viewed as a display of weakness. Perhaps it's because I observed Shiki closely. I witnessed her unwavering determination to keep fighting, even if it meant enduring pain or enduring a beating. While some of her resolve may be self-destructive, self-harming even...

Nevertheless, she possessed immense courage to keep forging ahead and confront the surging waves despite her fear. This is how a leader should behave. Regardless of her objectives, many students were saved because they followed her. Even if the Cultural Arts Center group, which was once our group, loses most of its members now that we're absent, they will still do everything in their power to protect it. They have grown so resilient that one could argue it was Shiki's unwavering determination that brought about this transformation.

Considering this, I believe a leader should be in the safest position possible. Even if they are an exceptional leader, they must monitor the state of the town from a secure vantage point and take responsibility for the chosen plan. I intend to convey this to Mia. Mia contemplates for a moment...

"I've been thinking about this for a while, but Kazu, you really love Shiki, don't you?"

"You have no idea what you're talking about."

"Do you have a crush on her?"

"Well... maybe. The first thing I thought about her was that I wanted to kill her someday, so..."

"So, Kazucchi is a tsundere, huh?"

"Male tsundere is creepy."

Mia gives a shrug, indicating that she may have some thoughts about tsundere as a girl, but she doesn't delve into it further. After a moment of staring at the wooden floor, Mia lifts her head.

“Then, Kazucchi, I have a proposal.”

“Go ahead.”

“Those kids say that there are only about a hundred people gathered in the center of town.”

“So?”

“Let's save all of them.”

I scowl. If we could accomplish that, things would be much easier... or so I thought. It's unlikely that Mia doesn't grasp the challenges involved.

“What are your plans?”

“Summon a hundred butlers and maids and have them assist in carrying everyone in the town. Then we can use the deflection spell and the flight spell.”

I see. I nod and immediately contact the servant team to inquire if this plan is feasible. I didn't anticipate the butlers and maids possessing such strength. They mention that it would be possible if there aren't too many overweight individuals.

One of the maids even lifts me up. Despite feeling heavy, she holds me in her arms. There's a sizable bosom right in front of me, but I do my best to ignore it.

In that state, Mia casts Wind Walk on the maid. She simply walks straight up into the air. Each time the maid takes a step, her soft breasts lightly brush against my cheek, which feels rather lewd.

Anyway...

If one maid can lift me on her own, then a butler can do the same for a man. If someone is too heavy for one person to carry, two people can handle it.

With the assistance of Mighty Arm, we can achieve anything we desire. Mia had a brilliant idea, and I acknowledge her for it.

“I put a lot of thought into it,” Mia says with her usual blank expression.

Though she doesn't show it, I can tell she's pleased. In fact, she's more nervous than ever, as she doesn't even tease me when I'm on the verge of succumbing to the allure of breasts.

KAZUHISA	
LEVEL: 24	SUPPORT MAGIC: 5
SUMMONING MAGIC: 7	SKILL POINTS: 5

After further discussion, we return to our original location to finalize the details.

Chapter 84: Battle in the Fortress City - Part 8

Upon returning to the pier, Mia begins questioning the children to gather more information about the current situation. Meanwhile, I dismount from the centaur knight and scan our surroundings. This place is challenging to defend... In our discussions in the white room, we often overlook the importance of finding a secure location.

“Can we find a building to take shelter in? Preferably a sturdy one...” I suggest, momentarily forgetting about the giants' immense power. However, no building would be able to withstand their brute strength.

“Anywhere will do, as long as it's a building that won't attract attention. Let's get inside before the enemy discovers us,” Mia responds.

“I've found them, my lord,” the centaur knight reports, shooting an arrow without awaiting my orders. A hobgoblin falls about 20 meters away. The other three hobgoblins, witnessing their comrade's demise, flee in panic.

Impressive discipline. They must be the reconnaissance squad, attempting to report back to the main force without engaging in unnecessary battles.

What should we do? Pursue them or not? After some hesitation, I decide, “Don't chase them. Let's move quickly instead.” It would be better to hide during the time it would take to pursue them. Moreover, they might have set traps along their escape route.

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We enter a two-story house a little distance away with the children. The deciding factor was that it had entrances at both the front and back, providing an escape route via flying magic from the attic if necessary. Mia proceeds to ask the children various questions, and the following is what she discovers:

- The name of this town is Hesh Resh Nash, which aligns with what she heard in the white room.
- The army of monsters is referred to as the Demon King's army. When asked about the Demon King, the response is in the form of a question, "Isn't it the King of the Monsters?" It seems they don't have much knowledge on the subject, raising the possibility of a translation error.
- They don't seem to know much about this country or the world. In fact, it appears that they don't even attend school. "Illiterate... well, I guess that's to be expected."
- Everything has changed in the past year or so. People come and go less, caravans are fewer, and prices for goods have risen. The number of monsters has increased, culminating in a group of monsters attacking this town. "So, this world wasn't in this state from the beginning."
- Yesterday, around 20 soldiers remained in this town. The rest left with the lord. According to the commander of the remaining soldiers, the lord went out to intercept the monsters. It was only when the group of monsters arrived that the townspeople realized they had been used as bait.
- The soldiers who stayed behind in the town belonged to a faction that had been kept separate from the lord.

Well, that's the situation. It appears that the captain died during the battle for the walls, leaving no one in command. The children overheard a demoralized soldier revealing some of the lord's plans after the captain's death. Here's what they learned:

- The parents of these children have already died in the war, so they tried to escape without consulting other adults. However, there were already scattered hobgoblins throughout the town. If Mia hadn't passed by, they would have been killed.
- The lord's mansion has turned into a makeshift fortress in the town, and all the remaining residents have gathered there. When the monsters

appeared, many people started fleeing the town in large numbers. The whereabouts of those who stayed behind are unknown.

- There are now less than 100 people left in the lord's mansion, mostly women, children, and elderly individuals. The able-bodied men were drafted to defend the town. The people with mismatched equipment seen during the crow's reconnaissance were likely these temporary soldiers. They bolstered the ranks to about 100 but were ultimately wiped out.

That's the basic information we have. I check the time on my watch. It has been an hour and 20 minutes since we were teleported to this region from the cave, or rather, 80 minutes. Even if I use summoning magic to call for reinforcements, it will take another 40 minutes for them to arrive. The lord's mansion won't hold out until then. The lord must have anticipated this and plans to execute the flood operation soon. We'll use the butlers and maids to assist the residents, but first, we need to deal with the monsters approaching the mansion. After that, we can attempt to escape by flying.

The monsters will be lured into the muddy stream, while the ordinary people acting as decoys will hopefully survive. But we need to convince the remaining residents to join us in surviving. The children still refer to me as the “monster handler,” and they're still somewhat afraid of me.

“So, 'monster handler,' is that like a job or something?” one of the children asks.

“Well, um, I don't really know,” I respond.

“So that means there's nobody else like you, right?”

“Some magic users are said to have crows or hawks as familiars. And you use crows as your familiars too, so...”

Even though I've leveled up significantly, crows are still useful.

“Back then, I could only use crows as well. But as I trained, I learned to use all sorts of familiars.”

I reassure the person, even though “back then” was just two days ago.

Anyway, if there are soldiers in the lord's mansion, we might be able to reason with them... but I'm not sure if that will work. Well, there's no point in just sitting around thinking about it. It's time to take action.

While we're in the town, we observe that the monsters are advancing towards the town center. Knowing that the mansion's defenses won't hold against the powerful giants that have already destroyed the outer walls, we decide to act swiftly. I release a crow to scout ahead, ensuring there.

are no hobgoblins outside, and we move forward with caution, accompanied by the wind elemental keeping an eye on our surroundings.

However, we couldn't avoid a battle with the hobgoblins that had flooded the town. We engage in two fights and manage to defeat a total of five hobgoblins. Mia gains a level during the encounters, bringing her to level 18. We save our skill points and promptly return to our original location.

Mia's current stats are as follows:

MIA	
LEVEL: 18	EARTH MAGIC: 4
WIND MAGIC: 6	SKILL POINTS: 5

Fortunately, we successfully eliminate all the hobgoblins without letting any escape. The Centaur Knight proves to be a skilled warrior, wielding his sword and bow effectively, but his greatest asset is his mobility.

After around five minutes of cautious progress, we reach a large mansion slightly east of the town center. The mansion's walls have already collapsed, and inside, we witness two giants attacking the surviving soldiers in the garden. Luckily, there are no hobgoblins in sight. This could be an opportunity to help the residents feel safe.

“Let's take them down,” I suggest.

“Sure, leave it to me,” responds the Centaur Knight. I assign the two Wind Elementals to guard the surroundings, and I cast Haste on the Centaur Knight, enhancing his speed and agility.

“I'm counting on you,” I say.

“You can rely on me, master,” replies the Centaur Knight.

The Centaur Knight charges at the giant that had just slain two soldiers. Simultaneously, Mia casts a spell, “Stone Bind,” causing the giant's feet to be trapped by scattered stones in the garden. As the Centaur Knight engages another giant, his lance strikes deeply into its ankle. Despite the giant's attempts to retaliate, the Centaur Knight swiftly withdraws, maneuvers to the other side, and delivers another powerful blow.

The giant falls to its knees, and the Centaur Knight's lance pierces its neck, dealing a fatal blow. Meanwhile, the other giant roars and, using its strength, drags the stone along as it closes in on the Centaur Knight, who still hasn't pulled out his lance from the first giant.

“Mia, cover me,” I call out.

“Got it. Lightning Arrow,” Mia responds, launching six lightning arrows that strike the giant's body, delivering a powerful shock.

The giant convulses in pain, momentarily faltering due to the intensity of the shock from Mia's Lightning Arrows. Seizing the opportunity, the Centaur Knight forcefully retrieves his lance from the dead giant's body and retreats. The giant attempts to pursue, but the Centaur Knight swiftly turns his horse and charges towards it. The distance between them rapidly diminishes, and they collide.

The giant topples to the ground, clutching the knee where the lance had pierced. The Centaur Knight turns around, leaping onto the giant's back and delivering a fatal blow to its neck with his sword. The giant lets out a dying scream, signifying the end of the battle. “I've improved significantly,” the Centaur Knight remarks.

The wind elemental, which had been keeping watch from a nearby building, returns to me with information. “The remaining two giants are approaching.”

“What about the hobgoblins?” I inquire.

“They seem to have scattered throughout the area. Their captain is gathering his subordinates two streets away.”

I understand the situation. While we may be formidable opponents to the enemy, capable of defeating giants, they are likely gathering their forces to attack us in a systematic manner. However, the giants themselves might not be perfectly coordinated, presenting us with an opportunity.

“Let's deal with the remaining two giants first. Wind Elemental, alert us when the hobgoblin captain arrives,” I instruct.

The movement of the two giants comes to a halt. According to the Wind Elemental's report, the mage accompanying the hobgoblin captain seems to have cast a spell.

“It might be Whisper Sound,” Mia suggests.

Whisper Sound is a rank 3 wind magic spell that allows one to convey words to someone at a distance. It serves as an effective means of communication, similar to a cell phone, especially in military scenarios. Did they use it this time to transmit the captain's orders to the giants? That presents a challenge...

“Kazu, it's impressive but dangerous. What should we do?” Mia asks, expressing concern.

“I understand. Mia, take the children and find someone who can negotiate with the soldiers or the locals, anyone who can communicate effectively,” I reply.

In the worst-case scenario, we may have to abandon them and focus on our own survival. That's how perilous this hobgoblin army is...

“You'll be the one to persuade the locals,” Mia hesitates momentarily, then nods with determination. With the children in tow, she swiftly enters the lord's estate.

Now, it's up to me to buy some time, it seems.

Chapter 85: Battle in the Fortress City - Part 9

We are aware that trying to buy time against over 150 hobgoblins and two giants with only a Centaur Knight and two Wind Elementals is an impossible task. However, remaining silent would allow the enemy to organize themselves and launch an invasion on the mansion. It's also dangerous to expose ourselves since there are still magicians among the hobgoblins.

The situation is precarious, but I must devise a plan to delay the enemy's advance and create an opportunity for our escape.

We strategize to launch an attack on the enemy, but a direct assault is not feasible. Instead, we opt for a covert approach, attacking from a distance where we won't be easily detected. Despite initial doubts about the usefulness of summoning magic, it proves to be advantageous in this situation.

Moving counterclockwise from the enemy gathering point toward the north, I reach a partially open park area while keeping an eye on the Wind Elementals. Utilizing my magic, I cast "Summon Siege Engine," a rank 7 summoning spell that brings forth a massive trebuchet. This ancient wooden siege weapon, equipped with modern automation, already has ten large stones loaded and ready to be launched. It costs only 7 MP to summon, and I swiftly summon three more catapults, forming a line of four in the square.

Operating the trebuchets is straightforward. We aim using the lever and simultaneously press the launch button, joined by the two Wind Elementals, the Centaur Knight, and myself. The wind howls as the large rocks are launched, soaring across the street towards the hobgoblins. The Wind Elementals soar higher to observe the impact, and the ground trembles. A dust cloud rises several buildings away.

Eagerly awaiting the result, I inquire, "Did it work?" The Wind Elemental observer reports to me, "We missed." Disappointed, I sigh and adjust the angle for a second shot, determined to aim better.

As the impact lands on the third attempt, screams fill the air. “Ah, maybe we caused some damage,” I muse aloud. However, the Wind Elemental interrupts with a warning that about 20 hobgoblins are approaching our location. I shrug, remarking, “Well, it's only natural they would come if there's damage.” But I recognize the need to be prepared. I confirm if the main enemy force is still concentrated, and upon receiving affirmation from the observer, I decide to take a third shot. “We did it! Direct hit!” I exclaim, joined by the ecstatic Wind Elementals. It seems we have crushed four creatures with a single strike.

Exhilarated by the success, I suddenly feel a surge of power as I level up. Instantly, I find myself transferred to the white room.

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In the white room, I exchange information with Mia, who has also leveled up at the same time. We have gained the same amount of experience. However, something seems amiss about her appearance. Covered in blood and clutching her left shoulder, she insists, “I'm fine. Just a scratch.”

Concerned, I ask, “You don't look fine at all... Was it a monster?”

“No, a human. A soldier,” she replies, her voice filled with tension.

“No way...” I exclaim, unable to believe it.

Mia nods grimly, confirming the unsettling truth.

“It's suspicious, isn't it? He suddenly appeared and offered to help us escape,” Mia remarked, raising the corners of her mouth sarcastically.

“I can't help it if they think I'm a minion of the monsters,” I replied.

“I'll go help them right away. All right, enough, just leave and go away quickly...” I suggested.

Mia chuckled and shook her head. “The misunderstanding has been cleared up. The negotiations are going fairly smoothly.”

“What do you mean by 'fairly smoothly'?” I asked, curious to hear the details.

Mia proceeded to explain that the surviving soldiers were initially suspicious of her, considering her an intruder of unknown origin. They became agitated and even attempted to kill her on the spot, grazing her shoulder with a sword. However, Mia swiftly incapacitated the soldier by lulling them to sleep with a sleeping song. She then used the Fly spell to move out of their reach before the remaining soldiers could approach.

“I also cast Fly on the child I brought with me.” Then I said, “I’ll do this to everyone, okay?” Mia added.

“I see. Actually demonstrating it makes a stronger impression, doesn't it?” I remarked.

“More of the women around here believed me than the soldiers did. The soldiers reluctantly agreed because their wives were assertive,” Mia explained.

I recalled that most of the soldiers were conscripted from this town, which meant that behind every soldier was a strong woman supporting them.

“The soldiers were desperate too. They were willing to fight to the death to protect their wives and children,” Mia revealed.

“I see...” I replied, realizing there was nothing more to say. Even though they knew the chances of winning were slim, their determination to protect their loved ones drove them to resist.

Mia was supposed to be the beacon of hope for these people. The challenge lay in making them understand her role.

“It wasn't smooth sailing, but that's unavoidable. Mia did well,” I praised her.

“Is it necessary to question negotiators like us more than once in a row?” Mia asked.

“There are plenty of negotiators who put their bodies on the line in a different sense,” I replied.

“I don't want to see you being interrogated,” Mia said with concern.

Regardless, it was a relief that the conversation seemed to be progressing positively. Though I expected it to take more time...

“Okay, I’ll head over there right away,” I said, ready to assist.

“Yeah, do that. There may not be much time left,” Mia warned.

“Um, what does that mean, exactly?” I inquired.

“You might not have heard it because of the sound of the catapult, but...” Mia paused, setting the stage for her revelation.

“We heard a strange noise coming from the east. It's getting louder. And all the birds suddenly took off from the mountain and fled,” Mia informed me.

“Oh no. That's really bad...” I responded, feeling a sense of urgency.

“Hurry,” Mia urged.

“Got it, I'll go as fast as I can. I wanted to reduce the number of enemies a little more and earn more experience points, but...” I hesitated, realizing the need to prioritize our safety over gaining experience.

“Giving up. Earning experience points is what keeps us alive,” Mia reminded me.

Her words made sense, and I understood the importance of staying alive in this dangerous world.

Then, a sudden realization struck me. “Come to think of it, what about the soldiers? Like, how do they level up in this world?”

Mia seemed puzzled. “Hmm?”

“Well, if you defeat a hobgoblin, you get 120 experience points for one. If you defeat two, you'll be at level 3, right?” I pondered aloud.

“Oh, I don't know about the party system,” Mia admitted.

I considered whether I had already explained the party system to her. But regardless, it seemed that even veteran soldiers were unable to form parties and didn't possess knowledge about leveling up.

“I see, so we're fundamentally different from them,” I concluded.

“Surely, our growth is special,” Mia agreed.

So that's how it is. Perhaps the system of leveling up and gaining experience points is exclusive to people from other worlds who have arrived in this one.

The PCs and the white classroom-like room gave off a modern feeling, distinct from the typical fantasy world. The skills and levels resembled those found in computer RPGs, reinforcing my suspicion.

Could it be that these systems were specifically designed for us? Were we the only ones in this world who differed so greatly from the people who existed on that mountain?

If that were the case, what was the significance of our appearance in this world? In a world filled with a Demon King and monsters, where defeating those monsters held rewards, what role did we play?

“Kazu, let's stop thinking so hard,” Mia interjected, breaking me out of my contemplation.

“Well, I'd like to do that, but...” I trailed off, feeling overwhelmed by the weight of these existential questions.

Mia nodded and gestured for me to sit cross-legged on the floor. Then, she jumped onto my lap, and I instinctively held her small body from behind. Mia looked up at me with a reassuring gaze.

“Kazu, it's a bad habit to think too hard on your own,” she said softly.

I let out a sulky groan, feeling like a sulking child. “Ugh.” My expression must have mirrored the taste of a bitter bug.

In that moment, being comforted by Mia's presence, I realized the importance of finding solace in the present moment rather than dwelling too deeply on the mysteries of our existence.

“We were just caught up in this. Even if the ones who gave us this power have their own expectations, and even if we survive with this power, we don't need to move according to the intentions of the owner of this room,” I expressed, pondering our situation.

“That's true... but come on, Mia, weren't you the one who said you wanted to become a hero?” I reminded her.

“Mia is more important than helping people, right?” Mia responded, tilting her head as if it were an obvious truth.

"If saving Kazu means abandoning a hundred people, I will abandon a hundred people with all my might," she declared firmly.

"Well, I guess I'm loved," I chuckled, feeling a mixture of emotions at her unwavering devotion.

"Mm," Mia affirmed, not needing words to express her affection. Instead, she kissed my neck, sending shivers down my spine. Without thinking, I held her tightly in my arms.

"Did you feel that?" I asked, unable to resist the surge of desire.

"You, man..." Mia playfully scolded me. "If I can't resist anymore, I'll push you down..."

"Cut it out," I teased her, lightly punching her head. She groaned in response.

"You're such a wimp," Mia retorted, pouting.

"I already have two girlfriends, so..." I trailed off, hinting at our complicated situation.

"I don't want to be left out, you know?" Mia admitted, running her hand along my neck, her chest touching mine.

"Do you think I'm a disappointment now?" she asked, her voice tinged with insecurity.

"I don't think so," I reassured her sincerely.

"Liar," she pouted, lightly pinching my cheek with her small hand.

I chuckled, finding comfort in our playful banter amidst the uncertainty of our circumstances.

"After helping the townspeople, what do we do?" I asked Mia, seeking her perspective. It might seem odd to ask such a question to a middle school girl, but it was Mia who had expressed her desire to assist them, and I wanted to honor her wishes.

"Let's think simply. We have enemies, but there might be people who could become our allies," Mia deliberated, her thoughts taking shape.

“If that's the case, then right now, I want to focus on building alliances with those who seem likely to become allies. As for what comes after, we'll think about it later,” she proposed, emphasizing the need for practicality.

“But what if, as a result, you end up abandoning the people you worked so hard to save?” I questioned, concerned about the potential consequences of our choices.

“I already told you earlier,” Mia replied, looking straight into my eyes with determination. Her chest puffed out, she continued, “If it came down to all of those people or Kazu, I'd choose Kazu. If they become a hindrance and put Kazu in danger, I'll cut them down.”

There wasn't a shred of hesitation in her clear declaration, leaving me both awestruck and reassured by the unwavering loyalty she held for me.

“Is that really okay?” I asked Mia, unsure if she was truly content with her decision.

“It's not like I want to be a hero of justice. To become a hero, the people you want to be praised by have to survive first,” Mia explained her perspective.

“Mia... do you want me to praise you and make you a hero?” I inquired, wanting to understand her motivations.

“Well, I want others to praise me too, you know? But first and foremost, it's Kazu. I want to be a hero for Kazu,” Mia expressed, emphasizing her desire to be recognized by me.

I didn't need to question her further. She had already resolved herself. It was the same decision Arisu had made two days ago, and Tamaki had made the previous day. I accepted it, knowing that I could shoulder the burden of these three girls.

For the past two days, I owed my survival to these girls. Their kindness was imprinted in my heart, even for Mia, who wasn't physically involved. If anything, it was through building trust and expressing my gratitude in words that I could strengthen our bond.

“I'll praise you, Mia. You're amazing. Well done... I'm counting on you from now on too,” I assured her, gently stroking her head.

Mia narrowed her eyes and nodded, acknowledging my words and the support I offered.

“By the way, is it okay to put the skill points into wind magic?” I asked, diverting the conversation to a more practical matter.

“Of course. With this, I'll be rank 7,” Mia replied confidently.

KAZUHISA	
LEVEL: 25	SUPPORT MAGIC: 5
SUMMONING MAGIC: 7	SKILL POINTS: 7

MIA	
LEVEL: 19	EARTH MAGIC: 4
WIND MAGIC: 7 → 7	SKILL POINTS: 7 → 0

After making these adjustments, we returned to our original location.

Chapter 86: Water Attack

As soon as we arrived back at the catapult, I ordered my familiars to retreat. I mounted the back of the Centaur Knight.

“To the lord's mansion!” I commanded, urging the Centaur Knight to run away from the square. The Wind Elementals followed closely behind.

Time was of the essence once the water attack began. Soon, the mansion's wall came into view. I dismounted the Centaur Knight in front of the wall.

I gave the familiar the order to run to the crack in the wall and circumvent it. A Hobgoblin obstructed the Centaur Knight's path.

“While you're at it, kick them out of the way!” I instructed.

“Understood,” the familiar responded with confidence. I trusted that everything would be handled smoothly with the assistance of this familiar.

Using the hands of two Wind Elementals, I climbed over the wall and rolled into the garden, preparing for the next phase of our plan.

About a hundred people had gathered in the courtyard, including three men who appeared to be soldiers. They were visibly injured, using their weapons as support. Their bandages were stained with blood, a testament to their valiant efforts in fending off the Hobgoblins' attacks.

They were unaware of our arrival, and it was purely coincidental that we stumbled upon them. However, their resilience and sacrifices had prevented their complete annihilation thus far.

But Mia's offer to help them in their current state would be nothing short of a tempting offer from the devil. Mia, too, had received medical attention from a local elderly woman, her injured shoulder being treated. I quickly averted my gaze from the exposed area of her chest.

A middle-aged woman stepped forward and bowed deeply before me, radiating a sense of reverence as she pleaded, “We will follow you. Please, save

us.”

I wasn't sure what Mia said in such a short time, but she handled the difficult task with grace. That alone was enough.

After completing her treatment, Mia stood next to the woman and looked at me, nodding slowly.

“Kazu, please,” she urged.

“Ah, okay. I'll summon the team that will transport you now. Summon Servant Team,” I commanded. Suddenly, a hundred butlers and maids appeared, startling the townspeople and leaving the three soldiers in awe with their mouths agape.

Time was running out. From the east, the sound of roaring and whistling grew louder, indicating the impending destruction approaching the town.

I depleted the rest of my MP and cast the Mighty Arm spell from the Deflection Spell, enhancing the physical strength of the butlers and maids. Brilliant light enveloped their arms, empowered by the amplified magic.

Just then, the Centaur Knight arrived.

“Master, I killed three hobgoblins,” it reported.

“Understood, thank you,” I acknowledged.

The soldiers remained on guard, but their tension seemed to ease a bit as they witnessed the friendly interaction between me and the Centaur Knight. However, time was running short, and the whistling sound grew more intense.

“Mia, change of plans. Let's use Fly instead of Wind Walk,” I proposed.

“Okay, understood,” Mia agreed.

In haste, I cast the Deflection spell on Mia this time, and she, in turn, cast Fly on our group, including our familiars and the servant team. The butlers and maids floated gently in the air.

We decided to forgo Wind Walk due to the difference in movement speed. Ascending like climbing stairs with Wind Walk wouldn't be fast enough to escape the imminent danger.

With the Fly spell in effect, we soared through the sky at bird-like speeds, granting us a significant advantage in terms of swiftness. The butlers and maids swiftly joined the crowd, each carrying a person and ascending into the sky, creating an otherworldly spectacle.

Due to their leather armor, the soldiers proved to be a bit heavier, requiring the assistance of two butlers or maids for each person. I briefly entertained the idea of flying on my own, but Mia reminded me, "Recognizing one's own lack of ability is also courage."

"Damn it, thanks for the valuable advice!" I replied, acknowledging my limitations. I obediently mounted the Centaur Knight's back, fully aware of my lack of athletic prowess.

"Fly," I commanded.

"Understood," the Centaur Knight responded.

Meanwhile, the butlers and maids I summoned showcased their adept control over flight, each carefully carrying one person up into the sky. Mia, utilizing her rank 3 wind magic, Control Wind, created an appropriate updraft to facilitate their ascent. Though this magic had its limitations, it proved to be quite effective in this situation.

The Centaur Knight took the lead, soaring higher than everyone else. From my elevated position, I observed the butlers and maids ascending one by one, their figures growing smaller in the distance. My gaze then shifted to the mountain in the east.

A massive brown wall emerged, overpowering the lush greenery of the mountain. I realized that it was a wall of water rising through the forest. How did they manage to accomplish that? Was it the result of damming and releasing the river's water?

"The magician in this town utilizes Water Elementals," Mia informed me as she fluttered up to my side.

"I see, so it's magic at work. Is the water magician one of the lord's subordinates?" I inquired.

"He's actually one of the Forest Spirit Users," Mia replied.

“Forest Spirit Users... specializing in elementals? Or is it merely their appearance?” I questioned.

“It's possible that our magic systems fundamentally differ,” Mia speculated. “If defeating monsters and gaining skill points through leveling up is a privilege exclusive to us, then it's reasonable to assume that the magic system can vary greatly.”

Indeed, it was an impressive feat. If they possessed the ability to freely manipulate spirits, it would explain their control over water in such a manner.

A massive volume of water had transformed into a towering wall, rushing down the mountainside. Its leading edge collided with a nearby observation tower, approximately 10 meters tall, engulfing it entirely. The town's walls were now within close proximity.

“Evacuate quickly!” shouted the butlers and maids. Peering down, I spotted a young woman running toward the mansion, seemingly desperate as if time had run out.

“My child hasn't returned yet! And Marly, who went to search for him, is still...” The maids hurriedly chased after her in a panic.

Mia attempted to land on the ground, but I halted her by firmly gripping her shoulder.

“It's no use,” I told her.

“But, Kazu...” Mia began, expressing her concern.

“We don't have time. Let's leave it to the butlers and maids,” I declared, redirecting our attention away from the desperate scene unfolding below. Instead, I turned my gaze toward the hobgoblins, wondering about their situation.

To the west side of the town, a sight left me speechless. The hobgoblins had gathered in the park, forming a circle. In the center stood the hobgoblin who appeared to be their leader, chanting something resembling a spell.

Captain Hobgoblin's body began to emit a dark red glow, and before his eyes, the space distorted as if viewed through a fish-eye lens. Slowly, a pinkish object,

something akin to meat, emerged from the warped space. Instinctively, we understood what it was.

“Globster...” Mia swallowed hard and trembled uncontrollably.

Reaching out from the back of the Centaur Knight, I embraced Mia, providing comfort and reassurance. “Kazu, it's okay... it's okay,” she muttered, trying to find solace in my arms.

“Yeah... you're right. It will soon sink into the water...” I responded, trying to maintain a sense of calm amidst the unfolding chaos.

When I turned my gaze back to the east, I witnessed the colossal wall of water closing in on the mansion, devouring the eastern part of the town. However, the woman who had sought refuge inside the mansion had yet to emerge. In the courtyard, two elderly men anxiously awaited her return.

This was dire. Time was running out, and we needed to act swiftly. Mia and I shouted from above, urging them to hurry. Upon hearing our calls, the butlers and maids began their persuasive efforts. One of the old men had no choice but to ask a butler to carry him. The butler swiftly complied, lifting the man into the air...

And then, it happened.

The wall of water, now surging with even greater force, swallowed the mansion in an instant. The elderly man in the garden, the man just lifted into the air, and all those involved in their rescue vanished beneath the muddy torrent.

A suppressed scream escaped Mia's lips. I commanded the Centaur Knight to ascend even higher and head toward the southern hill, still holding Mia securely in my arms, leading our group to safety.

Glancing back at the town, which grew more distant by the second, I witnessed the floodwaters washing away all the hobgoblins, the last two giants, and the Globster. The trap, meticulously planned with decoys and sacrifices, had worked flawlessly. I couldn't help but think that the lord had made a wise choice. Shiki-san and I could probably shake hands while laughing and secretly mocking each other under the table. Truly, to hell with all of them.

“Oh, damn it!” I exclaimed, tightening my grip on Mia's fragile body.

“Kazu, it hurts,” Mia winced, biting her lower lip as she locked eyes with me. Her gaze threatened to well up with tears, and an overwhelming sense of pain surged within my chest.



Suddenly, a strange sensation akin to dizziness washed over me. It felt as if Mia was about to vanish into thin air—a hallucination of sorts. Acting on instinct, I leaned in and pressed my lips against Mia's trembling ones. Her eyes widened in surprise, and I quickly pulled away, startled by my own actions.

“Sorry about that...” I stammered, trying to regain my composure.

“Hmm... thank you,” Mia responded, her voice filled with a mix of gratitude and curiosity.

“No, what I meant to say was...” I struggled to find the right words.

“Did you think that I was about to break?” Mia interjected, her tone gentle yet firm.

“Yes, exactly. But Mia, how about you?” I asked, concern evident in my voice.

“Hmm... thank you, really,” she replied, her words carrying a sense of sincerity.

“Mia, are you truly...” I began to question, my worry lingering.

“I was feeling overwhelmed, but thanks to you, Kazu, I feel a little better,” she admitted, her voice filled with appreciation.

Just then, a dazzling light emerged behind us. Turning our heads, we witnessed a brilliant column of light ascending from the center of the town. I squinted, trying to comprehend what was happening. The light was emanating from the area where the hobgoblins had gathered and where the Globster had appeared.

What in the world could have caused this?

Chapter 87: The Birth of a Threat

Mia and I watched in awe from the back of the flying Centaur Knight as the pillar of light vanished within seconds. Our eyes refocused on the spot where it had originated. To our surprise, we saw a swirling vortex of rushing water, with a massive figure standing tall at its center. This creature surpassed even the size of a Giant, measuring around six meters in length. It possessed the body of a horse but had four arms like a Centaur.

The being's face was obscured by a helmet, making it difficult to discern its features. It wore leather armor that covered its chest and extended to the back of its equine body. In its upper hands, it held a bow and arrow, while its lower hands gripped a sword and shield. All four arms were adorned with various weapons.

“That's... Satan Cross...” Mia uttered in disbelief, recognizing the creature.

I couldn't help but think, Be careful with your words. If the language translation function identifies that thing as Satan Cross, despite our limited understanding of the language, what should we do?

Thankfully, that wasn't the case. A soldier flying behind us, carried by a butler, leaned in and whispered, “Mekish Grau.”

“So that's the name of that monster,” I turned to the soldier and inquired.

Mia whispered to me, “He's the one who stopped the soldier from harming me.”

Ah, I see. He seems more dependable than most people.

The soldier nodded and replied, “Yes, Sir Great Sorcerer.” He appeared to be an ordinary-looking middle-aged man, the kind you might encounter in a bar upon closer inspection. He had blonde hair and brown eyes.

“In myths, there is a giant with four arms known as Mekish Grau—a spearhead among the wicked gods. His bow and arrow can even slay dragons,

and his sword can demolish a castle in a single blow... I can't believe he actually exists," the soldier shared, awe evident in his voice.

Well, I suppose it's a relief that we didn't end up with a name like Satan Cross, but ultimately, what difference does it make?

"Before that, what exactly is a grand sorcerer? Who said that? Where did they come from?" I look down at Mia, whom I'm holding in my arms. My trusted partner murmurs quietly, without expression, "Teehee."

"Bluffing is important, you know?"

"Remember that, punk."

"Titles and such are important when convincing scared people."

Hmm, I find it hard to argue with that. Mia was desperate when facing humans who pointed their blades at her.

Did they brainwash them to make them think that I, a grand sorcerer, was stronger than them? Well, it doesn't matter.

But that monster, Mekish Grau... This is the first time we've come across a monster with a unique name we don't know. Furthermore, if we consider the soldiers' stories, it's a mythological creature that actually exists in this world.

Where on earth did something like that come from?

Well, I kind of understand it faintly, but I just don't want to admit it. It's because of the Globster that we're here. They teleported us to this place in the cave, and at that time, it had a one-way teleport function.

Does that mean it also functions as a reception station?

There's another problem. Is that the only Mekish Grau that emerged? What happened to the Globster in the flood? If those creatures keep appearing, it'll be hopeless. No, even now, I'm already losing the will to fight. We escaped on the fly, so we should distance ourselves as quickly as possible. The first step would be to lower our altitude and avoid attracting attention.

I command my familiars, butlers, and maids to fly just above the ground. We are already outside the town, flying. We could land now since the water hasn't

reached us yet, but it's more convenient to stay airborne and continue our escape.

With flight, we can move at the same speed as birds. To prevent unnecessary casualties among the people we saved, we should focus on keeping our distance for now.

Mekish Grau takes a step towards the east. It's unclear whether he lowered his altitude immediately or simply disregarded us from the beginning. He might have been preoccupied with the flood approaching him. Even a 6-meter giant can be vulnerable if careless.

Are the other monsters still alive in that area, or has everything been washed away?

Mekish Grau doesn't seem to care about such trivial matters. He bends down and forcefully kicks the ground, running towards the mountain to the east. Along the way, he thrusts his giant sword into the water.

There's a dazzling flash, and we hear what sounds like a woman's scream that could cut silk.

“Probably the Water Elemental was defeated,” murmurs Mia.

Wasn't the Water Elemental the one controlling the flood itself? Mekish Grau must have identified and defeated a part of it. Mekish Grau doesn't stop running and quickly reaches the foot of the mountain. He pauses there and aims his giant bow and arrow diagonally upwards. Where is he aiming? Can he see the Water Elemental manipulator? If not, there's no explanation for his sudden action. If he can indeed see it, then he possesses incredible vision.

It appears that our only option now is to flee beyond Mekish Grau's line of sight. The arrow in his hand bursts into flames. Is it a magical bow and arrow or a unique ability he possesses? The centaur-like giant releases a towering arrow that matches his own height.

The flaming arrow forms a circle and is drawn into the apex of the mountain and the forest. In the next moment, a massive explosion shakes the depths of the mountain. The force of the blast topples trees, and a colossal mushroom-shaped cloud of smoke billows into the sky.

“What... did you say? Was there a bomb attached to it?” one soldier asks.

“According to myth, Mekish's evil flame attack harnesses the inferno's fury, reducing everything to ash,” another soldier explains.

Evil Flame Attack. The name alone sounds impressive... in a rather chuunibyou way.

“Um, do you know any other abilities?” I inquire.

“Y-yes. Mekish possesses three magical abilities. The Evil Thunder Slash, which unleashes lightning from his sword, and the Evil Dragon Eye, which grants him sight beyond all obstacles,” the soldier replies.

Evil Flame Attack, Evil Thunder Slash, and Evil Dragon Eye. The naming sense may be questionable, but these abilities are undoubtedly dangerous... Even if I activate my Resist skill, I can only resist two types of attacks...

Above all, the Evil Dragon Eye is far too perilous. It means he can perceive hidden things... Mia seems to be contemplating the same concern.

“Just recently, I learned Greater Invisibility...,” Mia says, her voice filled with disappointment.

Oh, right. At Wind Magic Rank 7, there's an upgraded version of Invisibility called Greater Invisibility. It's like a magical dream that allows you to vanish even during swift movements. You can observe your surroundings without restraint.

But I won't do it. I won't allow Mia to do it either. I briefly considered the possibility of employing Greater Invisibility in battle, but the existence of the Evil Dragon Eye easily nullifies that tactic.

No, that's not the way. Let's change our approach.

“Instead of discovering things after executing our plan, it's better to uncover them before executing it, don't you think?”

“Yeah, I understand, but...”

Since I advanced my skill rank, I haven't utilized any Rank 7 magic yet. Despite that, we quickly discovered the existence of a countering ability. Even Mia seemed taken aback.

“Normally, learning new magic feels like a triumph, preparing you for the next enemy.”

“The reality is that things don't always go smoothly.”

“We won't let you get away with this.”

“Well, before we discuss whether or not to forgive you, it's more important to consider if he'll let us go...”

At that moment, Mekish turns his attention toward us. The crimson glow of his eyes within the helmet pierces through me, sending a shiver down my spine.

“Mia, use Tempest!”

“Huh? Oh, right.”

Tempest, a Rank 6 wind magic, is a spell that generates powerful gusts of wind to blow away objects in a straight line. According to the Q&A, it possesses enough force to instantly sweep away even an adult. However, I couldn't help but feel that, in the end, it was just a spell for blowing things away. Despite reaching Rank 6, I found it somewhat lacking in practicality.

“Tempest!”

A violent gust of wind surges towards Mekish. Since the distance is considerable, it doesn't quite reach the enemy. Nevertheless, the disturbed air along its trajectory causes a slight deflection in the path of the crimson-flamed arrow heading straight toward me...

Fortunately, we were at a significant distance. The slight deviation in angle results in a few hundred meters of error in its destination. It lands far to our right, relative to our direction of travel.

An intense explosion erupts. The shockwave hits us, violently disrupting the atmosphere and nearly blowing us away. I cling tightly to the back of the Centaur Knight, holding Mia in my arms. The screams of townspeople echo all around us. Through squinted eyes, I can see that the blast has blown away several butlers and maids.

People fall from my familiars and plummet to the ground. I hear the sickening sound of flesh being crushed and bones breaking, accompanied by the

agonizing final screams of the dying.

The Centaur Knight manages to land on the ground and lowers its body to withstand the blast. The butlers who were protecting the townspeople also touch down and shield them.

Despite the efforts of my familiars, there are still numerous casualties. Once the explosion subsides, I glance down from atop the horseback... only to be met with a scene of hellish screams and spreading chaos.

There are people with twisted necks and others bleeding profusely. When I look toward the epicenter, a large crater has formed. It's terrifying. What on earth is this absurd level of power? Wait a moment, no, seriously, wait a moment. What can I do against something like this? The enemy's weapon possesses destructive power that makes it impossible to fight or escape from.

Regardless, we will soon reach the hill. The safe townspeople can seek refuge on the other side. Mia and I will... "Ah, ah, aah..." Mia's eyes widen, and she trembles. She stares at the tragic sight of the people we saved lying on the grass, suffering from gruesome injuries.

"Mia! Stay with me, Mia!" I gently tap Mia's cheek and embrace her slender body tightly once again. Mia gasps for breath.

"Why... I did my best, though."

"I know. I know that. Mia did her best."

"Then why...?"

"Pull yourself together! Many people are still alive! If you lose focus, the next attack will come. Protect those who are still clinging to life!"

Mia gazes at me absentmindedly, her eyes unfocused.

This is a dire situation. What can I do? How can Mia buy us time in her current state against such a formidable monster? How long can she hold on? And even if she manages to hold on, what should our next course of action be? If we try to run away, can we escape from an opponent wielding such a cheat-like long-range weapon?

In that case...

Should I abandon the people in the town and use them as bait to secure our escape?

I command the Centaur Knight to ascend back into the sky. Mia murmurs, “No, wait,” but I ignore her plea. Several butlers follow my lead and take flight alongside us.

And then, it happens.

A deluge of arrows, accompanied by flames and lightning spells, rains down on Mekish Grau from the mountain.

“What the...?”

What is happening? I'm utterly perplexed.

“It's the Lord's army!”

The middle-aged soldier from earlier, supported by one of the flying butlers, is brought to where the Centaur Knight is. He shouts, his left shoulder gripped in pain.

Has he sustained an injury from the explosion? I hope it's not a fractured bone...

No, more importantly, what did he just say?

“The Lord has challenged Mekish Grau to a fight!”

I shake my head in disbelief. So, the Lord used the town as bait...

No, that's not right. I must not misunderstand.

The Lord of the town intended to defeat the army of monsters even if it meant using the town as bait. He didn't employ the town as bait to facilitate an escape. Instead, he took a gamble, risking the lives of his own people in order to secure victory in the battle.

His plan had some success, but he didn't anticipate the appearance of the troublesome monster known as Mekish Grau. For the Lord, Mekish Grau became an enemy he was determined to defeat at any cost, even if it meant sacrificing the town.

No matter how many lives it took, he had no choice but to launch an attack, even if the odds of victory were slim. Mekish Grau's attention is once again drawn to the mountains as the barrage of arrows and magic shows no signs of abating, despite facing an overwhelmingly powerful foe.

“Now is our chance! Fly with all your might!”

I command the army of butlers and maids to escort the townspeople to safety on the other side of the hill. Fortunately, Mekish Grau remains focused on the opposite side, allowing for a successful evacuation.

The surviving townspeople reach the hilltop and swiftly descend to the other side. Excellent, everything went according to plan. Even if an explosion were to occur, the lives of the townspeople have been safeguarded.

After completing the task, I dismiss the butlers with gratitude. From this point forward, preserving our MP becomes crucial.

“Mia, are you alright?”

“Y-yeah... I'm sorry, Kazu-chan.”

“Don't worry about it. I'll do anything for you later, so hold on tight, okay?”

“Mm.”

Mia weakly nodded her head... and then she made a decision, vigorously shaking her head from left to right. She shook her head so vigorously that it seemed like it might come off.

“Yay! Let's get pumped up!”

She clenched both fists at her chest and shouted loudly. Then she looked at me and smiled.

“By the way, Kazu-chan. You said you'd do anything for me, right?”

“Hey now.” I playfully tapped Mia's head.

Mia smiled, looking a bit embarrassed.

※ ※ ※

Mia and I stood side by side on top of the hill once again, observing the situation. Mekish Grau shot several flaming arrows into the mountain, and with each attack, the counterattack from the lord's army weakened. It took more than 20 minutes until the mountain fell completely silent.

Despite enduring constant assaults from the lord's army, Mekish Grau remained unscathed. It was an overwhelming display of power. Was the lord's army too weak, or was Mekish Grau simply too formidable?

Did the lord witness our escape from the town with the people? Did he challenge Mekish Grau to a fight, fully aware of the recklessness, in order to aid the townspeople? Or did he believe that we would somehow find a solution and buy time?

Regardless, their sacrifice was not in vain. Their desperate counterattack held meaning.

“Two hours have passed,” I declared, standing atop the hill and preparing myself. Just at that moment, Mekish Grau turned his attention toward us.

I utilized my magic.

“Summon Circle.”

A red hexagram was drawn at my feet, and a white pillar of light ascended. Though small in scale, it bore resemblance to the light that appeared when Mekish Grau first emerged.

It was a teleportation magic that transported objects and beings to the cultivation hall located in the far distance. It was a rank 6 summoning magic.

Of course, those on the other side had to have completed their preparations within the promised timeframe.

But I had faith.

My comrades would not betray me.

As expected, a voice emanated from the vortex of light.

“Wow, it's so bright!”

“Yes. But I'm sure...”

A nostalgic voice reached my ears.

Only two hours had passed since we parted ways, but it felt like an eternity.

The light faded away.

Now, standing before me on the hilltop, were two girls with several bags. Arisu, with black hair and a spear in her hand, and Tamaki, with blonde hair and a white sword in her hand.



“Kazu-san!”

The two of them shout simultaneously.

I nod once and then glare at Mekish Grau in the distance.

“We'll talk later. Right now, we have a monster to defeat.”

I smirk.

“Our forces are gathered. It's time to launch a counterattack.”

Chapter 88: Mekish Grau

Several kilometers away, Mekish Grau launches flaming arrows toward us on top of the hill.

“Tempest!”

Mia's powerful wind magic once again deflects the arrows to the side, causing them to land on the grassy plain to the left of the hill and create a massive explosion.

A tremendous blast hits the hill, causing the people in the town who sought refuge behind the hill to scream in terror.

Everyone has been instructed to take cover, so they should be safe.

Arisu and Tamaki cover their heads and endure the blast. Afterwards, they gasp in amazement as they look at the epicenter of the explosion.

“K-Kazu-san, what's happening? What is that thing? I heard screams from the other side of the hill. What was that...?”

“There's a lot to explain, but to put it simply, that monster Mekish Grau is our main target. We have to defeat it. That's all. We'll go over the details in the white room.”

“The 'white room' has become a magical term for us. We understand that there's no time to explain now and that we'll discuss it later,” Tamaki says, nodding.

“Um, but can we really beat it?” Arisu asks anxiously. She seems worried after witnessing a tremendous explosion without any prior preparation.

It's understandable.

Despite my confident words earlier, I'm not entirely sure if we can win. I anticipate a challenging battle, even with Arisu and Tamaki's support.

But we must win. The enemy won't let us off easily, and innocent lives are at stake behind us.

No one has ordered us to protect them, nor do we have any obligation to do so, but...

The lords knew they couldn't win but still bought us time.

If that's the case, we must honor their sacrifice, or we'll regret it.

And then, I look at Mia. She looks back at me, her voice filled with rare determination.

"If it's only long-range attacks, I'll defend against them as many times as necessary. We won't let those arrows cause any more damage."

"But we don't have a way to attack from several kilometers away," I respond.

"If their projectiles don't work either... they should come closer to us," Mia suggests.

Mia is right. Mekish Grau charges toward us, its massive hooves pounding the ground as it closes the distance rapidly.

"Oh, by the way, Kazu-san," Arisu interjects, sounding flustered.

"On the other side of the cave, there's a beehive, and we defeated a lot of enemies there. Um, Tamaki-chan has reached level 8 in swordsmanship."

"That's reassuring. Tamaki, we're counting on you."

"Eh, me? Yeah, I'll do my best..."

If Tamaki's swordsmanship had reached level 8, then maybe we had a chance.

I cast basic enchantments on Arisu and Tamaki: Physical Up, Mighty Arm, Clear Mind. Then, using the Deflection Spell, I cast Resist Elements for fire and wind. Finally, I used the Deflection Spell to make Mia fly.

Since we had some time before the enemy approached us, I decided to cast more empowering spells...

But then, Mekish Grau shot a fiery arrow at us.

"Tempest!"

Mia used a tornado spell to deflect it sideways.

However, this arrow was much closer than the previous ones. It hit the ground near the hill, causing an explosion of heat and mud that flew everywhere. People hiding behind the hill screamed in terror.

“We can't stay here any longer.”

“Right, let's close the distance quickly.”

Finally, I cast Haste from the Deflection Spell and jumped onto the centaur knight. Thanks to Arisu's healing spell, my body felt much lighter than before.

“Let's go!”

I shouted as we charged towards the giant, spreading out as we left the hill behind. Arisu and Tamaki became a red flash and went ahead of us. Two Wind Elementals and Mia followed closely behind.

“Arisu, Tamaki, listen up. The enemy is Mekish Grau. According to the myths of this world, it's a monster with a flame arrow, a lightning sword, and the ability to see through deception.”

I decided to keep their actual names, Evil Flame Strike, Evil Thunder Slash, and Evil Dragon Eye, a secret. I didn't want to call them by those names, and besides, there was no guarantee that they would remember them if I suddenly told them.

“So we won't use any means of obscuring our vision with magic. Invisibility-type spells won't work either. I don't really know about the lightning sword, but please be careful just in case. It's dangerous to rely too much on Vendor.”

“Yes, understood!”

“Yep, leave it to us!”

Both of them replied energetically.

Well, Arisu will keep her promise to be careful. I hope she'll also watch out for Tamaki... I guess.

There is a winning strategy here, though. In this world, rank 9 is the limit for skills. I was delighted to hear that Tamaki's swordsmanship rank had risen to 8.

Even if Mekish Grau is an incredibly powerful destructive force, if we get close to it, the difference in close combat rank will be significant.

This has been proven in our battle with the giants. No matter how strong Mekish Grau is, it can't fight on equal footing with someone like Tamaki, who is an expert in close-range combat.

The giant noticed our approach and raised its sword and shield with its lower arms. Then, it drew an arrow once again with its upper arms...

“We won't let you do that again.”

By then, Mia's magic was within range.

The distance between us and the giant was about 200 meters.

“Electric Stun!”

Before the giant could release its arrow, Mia's lightning attack struck first.

Wind magic rank 7. This newly acquired spell spread an electric shock throughout the enemy's body, temporarily paralyzing it. The range of the spell was 30 meters for rank 1, but in Mia's case, she could aim and shoot up to 210 meters away. Despite its high rank, it seemed rather ordinary... This magic apparently couldn't be resisted without resist-type magic.

The momentary stiffness created a crucial opening. Mekish's aim was slightly off due to the shock, causing the released flame arrow to veer in the wrong direction and explode far away. The blast singed our backs.

However, during that opening, Tamaki and Arisu leaped onto the arms of the four-armed enemy.

“Let's go, Arisu!”

“Yes, Tamaki-chan.”

Tamaki's white sword clashed fiercely with Mekish's lower right hand sword, producing a sharp metallic sound. At the same time, Arisu's spear was blocked by Mekish's lower left shield.

“Ugh, both of them were blocked.”

Mia groaned. Mekish had managed to endure the Electric Stun and the combined attack from Arisu and Tamaki... This guy was no pushover.

Or perhaps, Tamaki, with a sword rank of 8, was being pushed back by Mekish's sword technique.

Could this guy be in the realm of rank 9 or something? It wasn't looking good...

“But based on what I've observed, he doesn't seem to possess much power.”

Mia, skillfully maneuvering on the Centaur Knight, came to my side. “At least, not for a giant.”

Come to think of it, Arisu's charge was indeed repelled, but Tamaki seemed to be holding her ground in mid-air, countering Mekish's attacks with clever angles to reduce the enemy's momentum. However, I couldn't make a precise judgment on her sword technique.

The Centaur Knight I was riding on conveyed this information to me. Frankly, I couldn't discern the details of Tamaki and Mekish Grau's intense swordplay. Their movements were so rapid that their figures blurred, leaving behind afterimages.

Was this the realm of rank 8 or higher? Was this the battle between those who had mastered their skill ranks? Arisu hesitated to intervene. Unlike Tamaki, who wielded an extended spear, her spear skill level was only 6. It couldn't be helped due to our party composition, as she had also focused on developing her healing magic.

“What should we do, Kazu-san?” Arisu took a step back and turned to me for guidance.

“How should we analyze this?” I asked the Centaur Knight. Specialized knowledge was essential for addressing specific problems.

“In terms of swordsmanship, the enemy likely has the upper hand. However, Mekish Grau's agility appears to be focused on countering Tamaki-sama,” the knight replies.

I see, even though he has four arms, he only has one body... That may be the key to victory. In that case...

“Arisu, go around to the opposite side of Tamaki!”

“Huh? Oh, okay!” Arisu seems to have grasped my intention immediately. She swiftly rotates and attempts to flank Mekish Grau from the other side.

However, the enemy keeps changing positions frequently, attempting to prevent this. But this diversion of attention means they are distracted from Tamaki. Seizing the opportunity, Tamaki strikes fiercely...

Just a little bit. Mekish Grau's hand, holding the giant bow with its four arms, is injured.

Mekish Grau cries out in agony.

Yes...! I clench my fist and rejoice.

But in the next moment, Tamaki screams and is thrown back.

“What... what happened?”

“Thunder attack, master!”

The Centaur Knight swiftly takes flight and makes a sharp turn.

Mia quickly wraps her hand around my waist. With us on his back, the Centaur Knight races across the ground.

The wide range of lightning strikes sweeps through the path we were just on. It was a close call, but we manage to dodge it.

The roaring wind gusts over our heads. There is a burning scent in the air. It was a devastating slash unleashed from Mekish Grau's sword. An invisible blade tears through the grass behind us. The ground is ripped apart, creating a black trench that is likely over a meter deep.

“Evil Thunder Slash,” murmurs Mia. Ah, she's using that name. Honestly, Tamaki, who was in close proximity, would have been in serious trouble if she didn't possess resistance.

The problem is that it's difficult to avoid, unlike the flaming arrow. It doesn't seem to reach too far, but... Does this thing have no openings at any distance? Well, it's still better to get close than to fight from a distance.

Above all, none of us have sustained serious injuries even after enduring that attack. Especially Arisu, who was in the process of turning counterclockwise towards the enemy's back, seems to have evaded the strike.

The attack range spans approximately 180 degrees from the front to the right. It's still quite wide. Tamaki might have taken a direct hit, but she quickly spins in the air, regaining her balance. She immediately shouts and charges forward. Though she may be slightly slower, she knows it well. And, above all, her best friend Arisu understands it too.

“Please, Arisu!” Tamaki yells while swinging her white sword at Mekish Grau.

Arisu synchronizes her magic with a deep breath.

“Ranged Heal.”

At this moment, the rank 4 healing magic, which has a range of up to 25 meters, proves to be sufficient in this close combat battlefield, even with enemies in between.

As Arisu's magic envelops Tamaki, her body is bathed in a faint light. Immediately, Tamaki regains her strength and strikes back forcefully against Mekish Grau.

Meanwhile, Arisu positions herself to threaten the giants from behind. She aims to strike from the rear and above, where the enemy's shield cannot reach...

Mekish Grau forcefully jumps back towards the rear, causing Arisu to hastily retreat to avoid being crushed.

“Here they come, my lord!” the Centaur Knight shouts. Mekish Grau readies his bow and arrows.

“Mia.”

“Yes. Tempest.”

Mia's wind magic stirs up the atmosphere violently.

Despite this, Mekish Grau still releases a flaming arrow. However, this time the distance between him and his opponents is less than 50 meters. The power

of Tempest's gusts is so strong that they collide head-on with the freshly launched flame arrow.

The close proximity causes the flame arrow to create a tremendous explosion. Arisu and Tamaki are blown away, screaming.

Smoke billows in front of them.

Well... it's now a do-or-die situation.

“Reflection.”

The moment I chanted the spell, I realized it was too late. The shockwave had slipped through the magic shield and was coming towards us.

The Centaur Knight shields me with his own body, groaning in pain. The intense heat from the blast sears my skin.

Immediately after, the sound of hooves approaches from the other side of the smoke.

Instinctively, I shout, “Evacuate! Run!”

Mekish Grau, with slightly burnt skin from the explosion, charges through the smoke.

“Oh no, it even anticipated the explosion of the flame arrow. Is it using it as a smokescreen to take us down one by one with the blast?!” Mekish Grau charges forward and swings his sword at Arisu, who is nearby.

A flash of light emanates from the tip of the sword, a prelude to an electric shock.

“Arisu!”

Without thinking, I let out a scream.

But despite being unable to find a favorable position, Arisu can clearly see Mekish Grau's movements.

“Flower Coat.”

She was too close to the enemy to escape. Her immediate reaction was to create a thin barrier around herself. It wasn't a very powerful barrier, but it was all Arisu could do.

Arisu barely manages to block the sword attack with the handle of her electrified spear. The sound of her scream, like tearing silk, echoes across the battlefield. Her body is blown away and spins like a top before crashing to the ground. A flashy cloud of dust rises where she lands.

“Arisu! Hey, Arisu!”

As a Centaur Knight, I can clearly see the enemy's movements. I leap to the side as soon as I hear the shout. I spin wildly in mid-air, but I desperately hold onto its back to avoid being thrown off.

Mekish Grau rushes straight ahead, putting some distance between us. The Centaur Knight manages to regain its balance.

As Tamaki charges towards Mekish Grau, shouting for him to wait, it becomes evident that we are at a significant disadvantage in long-range combat. We need to buy some time.

I call out Arisu's name and instruct the Centaur Knight to circle around. Suddenly, Mia appears next to us.

“Wait.”

Mia halts our actions, which were about to become more aggressive. She grips my shoulder tightly with her small hand.

“Arisu is fine. Now we need to focus on winning.”

Mia leans in, and our lips briefly touch. It's enough to bring me back to my senses.

“That was for earlier,” she says.

“Sorry,” I reply.

“Mmm, it's okay. Just love me later,” she says with a smirk.

“That's not something I can easily agree to,” I say.

Mia clicks her tongue, and I lightly tap her head.

“But that really helped me just now,” I add.

“Have I become Kazu's hero?” she asks.

“Hero... I don't know,” I chuckle.

“A hero is someone who can do what others can't or won't do,” she says, looking into my eyes. “I'm sure I'm Kazu's hero.”

“Maybe you are,” I say.

Mia smiles slightly.

Meanwhile, Tamaki is holding off the charge of the 6-meter tall Mekish Grau. She fights alone, clashing fiercely with the monster. No matter how many times she is blown away, she jumps back into the fight.

“Electric stun!” Mia occasionally provides support, helping to bring the battle to a standstill. The Centaur Knight, Wind Elemental, and I can only watch the intense battle from the sidelines.

But this won't do. What should we do? Should we let Mia use her trump card?

“Kazu, I leave the decision to you,” Mia says, looking up at me, waiting for an opportunity to intervene. “If it's now, can I go and help Arisu?”

“But what about earlier?” I ask.

“Earlier, you weren't thinking straight,” she replies.

Well, she has a point. I chuckle and declare our next move.

Chapter 89: Slay the Mythical Monster

I parted ways with Mia and ride on my Centaur Knight to reach Arisu, who has crashed on the ground. Clinging to the Centaur Knight's body, I leave everything to him as we descend rapidly. Two Wind Elementals also follow closely behind.

Mia continues to support Tamaki, who fights alone. As a precaution, she casts a Rank 1 Earth Bind spell, attempting to entangle Mekish Grau's ankles with grass that moves like a living creature... However, Mekish Grau roars, causing Tamaki's body to bounce like a ball. The wriggling grass is instantly blown away.

Ah, he possesses that technique after all—the Dispel Roar. Moreover, Mekish Grau's roar is more terrible than ever before. Even from my distance, my ears are filled with a ringing sensation. This is undoubtedly a powerful ability of Dispelling or Exorcism, surpassing that of a General or Giant. It's a formidable Breaking Demon's ability.

As for the practical effectiveness of this ability, I am uncertain. The General was able to break through Wind Magic Rank 2 Silent Field, and the Giant demonstrated similar capabilities, but they both failed to break Earth Magic Rank 4 Stone Bind with just that.

I wish to attempt Stone Bind on Mekish Grau, but unfortunately, the surroundings are covered in grassy fields. If I were to try, it would require Wind Magic Rank 5 Poison Smog, which would affect the entire area.

At this moment, Tamaki is no longer engaged in close combat. Ah, that's right, Tamaki was blown away quite far, wasn't she?

“Poison Smog.”

Mia creates a poisonous cloud around the enemy at precisely the right moment. Mekish Grau's body becomes buried within the eerie smoke...

The centaur-like giant roars and releases a poisonous cloud that scatters instantly. "As expected, it's not effective..."

Reluctantly, Mia switches to direct attacks with Lightning Arrow and provides support with Electric Stun since even rank 5 magic proves ineffective.

Meanwhile, I arrive at Arisu's location. The spot where Arisu fell is a deep patch of exposed black soil. She sits up and begins casting healing magic on her arms and legs. Her chest plate and gym clothes are torn in various places, presenting a gruesome sight.

I land the Centaur Knight next to Arisu and swiftly jump off its back, rushing towards her.

"I-It's okay, Kazu-san," Arisu looks up at me apologetically.

"My leg bone was broken and sticking out... it was excruciatingly painful, so I thought I would be a hindrance if I didn't receive treatment first."

"That's alright, let's prioritize getting treatment immediately!" Realistic descriptions aren't necessary; just hearing about it was painful enough. When I glanced at her thigh, it was bloody, but now it appeared clean and healed. However, a compound fracture is dangerous. The Evil Thunder Slash certainly lived up to its name, possessing extraordinary power when directly hit. I felt relieved that Arisu was alive and managed to create a thin barrier as a shield at the last moment.

In any case, this monster, Mekish Grau, possessed firepower far beyond anything we had encountered before. Its attacks were swift, even managing to bypass our Reflection magic. I wasn't even sure if Reflection would have worked in that moment.

With its four legs, the monster charged with incredible momentum. When it leaped back and then lunged at Arisu, my heart felt like it would stop.

And with its four arms, it could handle both short and long-range attacks, making it difficult to find an opening for a decisive blow.

As expected of a creature from mythology. I wondered how it was defeated in that myth. I should have asked the soldier for more information.

But even if there was a way to defeat it, they probably wouldn't disclose it. Either it wasn't described in detail, or a hero or brave individual defeated it through sheer force.

Regardless, that information wouldn't be useful in our current battle. Let's accept that and devise our own strategy.

“Is the pain gone?”

“Y-Yes. I'm mostly fine.”

I gazed into Arisu's eyes. Ah, she flinched slightly.

“Until the pain subsides, focus on healing yourself. If you endure, you'll be rewarded later.”

“E-eh, um... rewarded?”

Hey, why are you blushing like that, miss? If you become like Mia, your big brother will cry.

With that said, it's crucial for her to have her body in optimal condition while we plan our strategy. For now, she should concentrate on healing.

And then, she should lend an ear to my words.

“Actually, Mia has a hidden trump card. It can only be used once as a surprise attack, but we want to employ it to determine the outcome.”

I cast a glance at the battlefield and witnessed Tamaki covered in wounds, fiercely clinging to Mekish Grau. Our time was running out, and Fly was still far away, but it wouldn't be long before it caught up.

At worst, we had to settle things before Fly wore off. We wouldn't have time to regroup and reset the stakes, and the enemy wouldn't grant us such an opportunity.

I calmly explained the plan to Arisu.

With that being said, the task is simple. We will catch our opponent off guard with Mia's magic. Then, when they lose their balance, we will launch a coordinated attack. It's as straightforward as that.

Arisu ceased using her healing magic and stood up, saying, "I'm alright now... really."

I met her gaze and nodded in agreement. Why am I acting so authoritative? I'm just concerned that Arisu might do something reckless. Even now, Tamaki is injured and Mia is fighting hard. Arisu is deeply worried about them. She looks restless, wanting to return to the fight as soon as possible, even as she gazes at me.

"Get on the centaur knight's back. It's better if we stick together until we get close."

"Y-yes."

Arisu and I both mounted the centaur knight. I took the front position, and she positioned herself at the back, ready to dismount if needed.



Arisu presses herself tightly against my back, clinging to me. Her ample chest, concealed by her gym uniform, presses against my back... but really, that's irrelevant.

Let me emphasize it again: it's irrelevant.

Just to be safe, I cast Haste on Arisu once more.

The centaur knight soars into the sky.

“The timing is fleeting, the opportunity only comes once. If we fail, we retreat. Understand?”

“B-But what about the people on the other side of the hill...?”

“We abandon them and make our escape.”

I state firmly.

Arisu gasps.

But there's no other choice. There's no point in fighting when the odds of winning are nonexistent. So we'll take a gamble just once, and if it fails, we'll pay any price to get away.

I don't want anyone else on our team to get hurt. Let alone die. That's why I'm willing to sacrifice even complete strangers if necessary.

After a brief moment of hesitation, Arisu nods. She must have grasped my intentions.

“So we just need to win, right?”

“Well, yeah, I suppose so.”

She doesn't seem to fully comprehend the weight of my words.

Oh well, that's fine. Like Arisu said, all we need to do is win.

As the centaur knight passes by Mia, who is continuously unleashing her attack magic, I take notice of her worn-out appearance.

She must be exhausted from casting so much magic. In any case, it appears that this battle can't continue for much longer.

“Mia!”

As I pass by her diagonally, about 50 meters behind Tamaki, I call out to her.

“Let's do this, synchronize our timing!”

“Yeah!”

Tamaki seems to have heard our voices and strikes Mekish Grau even more fiercely with her sword, as if she's resolved to do something. The four-armed giant retaliates with a powerful counterattack, sending Tamaki flying...

Nevertheless, “Mia!”

“Gravity!”

Mia unleashes Wind Magic Rank 7, Gravity, aimed at Mekish Grau.

It's a gravity magic that creates a space where gravity fluctuates around the colossal monster. Mekish Grau's weight instantly increases by more than tenfold. The movements of the giant become sluggish. The effect of this magic lasts only about 10 seconds...

The grass adheres tightly to the ground, causing the surrounding terrain to collapse.

Mekish Grau emits a deep groan, followed by a roar. However, the giant's yell, which typically freezes opponents, has no effect under the influence of the extreme gravity.

“Alright, this Rank 7 magic cannot be dispelled!”

Still, Mekish Grau struggles with all its might to escape from the range of this power...

Nearly 10 seconds pass.

“Not yet, Mia!”

“Hmm, River's Gravity.”

Mia unleashes Wind Magic Rank 7, River's Gravity, which acts as the opposite of Gravity. It creates a space that completely counters the effects of Gravity.

In other words... Mekish Grau's enormous body begins to float lightly. The giant, previously struggling to escape the grasp of super gravity, loses balance and starts rotating in the air.

“Arisu!”

“Yes!”

Arisu, leaping off the Centaur Knight, wields her spear and charges forward like an arrow.

She had received prior instruction on these magic spells.

Through flight magic, Arisu quickly adapted to moving in three dimensions. Someone like her can trust herself in this alien environment and successfully navigate the unusual gravitational forces.

As Arisu approaches, Mekish Grau shoots a fiery arrow, but the giant's body is currently spinning in a complex manner. The magic misses its target and causes a massive explosion behind us. The giant then charges with thunder enveloping its sword, striking with a flash.

This attack, known as “Tempest,” had previously caused serious injuries to Arisu. Mia conjures a storm aimed at the spinning Mekish Grau, but the weightless environment around the monster causes its body to spin in the wrong direction, deflecting the thunder.

Although Arisu is affected by the gusts of wind from the storm, she quickly regains her balance and charges towards the giant from below. With the determination of a warrior, Arisu charges straight ahead, merging her body with her spear, and collides with the base of the arm holding Mekish Grau's sword. The giant groans in pain and drops its weapon.

“Tamaki!”

“Yes, leave it to me!”

Seizing the opportunity created by Arisu's strike, Tamaki approaches and slashes Mekish Grau's chest with her white sword. Blue fresh blood splatters in every direction.

From that point on, it becomes a one-sided battle. Mekish Grau is slashed and stabbed relentlessly by the two warriors, unable to effectively retaliate. By this time, the effects of River's Gravity have long since dissipated, but even when rolling on the ground, the enemy cannot recover from the disorientation.

Mekish Grau endures numerous attacks from Arisu and Tamaki, one of which proves to be fatal. The giant monster lets out a scream of agony, collapses to the ground, and eventually ceases all movement. Its body disintegrates instantly, leaving behind two yellow jewels. Simultaneously, we find ourselves in a white room. It appears that both Arisu and Tamaki have leveled up at the same time.

Chapter 90: Envoy

In the white room, we rejoiced at our reunion. Tamaki jumped into my arms, pressing her forehead against mine. Arisu smiled awkwardly as she watched. I gestured for Arisu to come closer, and I gently stroked her head.

“Thank you for coming,” I said, genuinely grateful.

When I summoned them using my magic, I never doubted for a moment that they would come. But seeing their faces filled me with relief. By answering my summons, they willingly embarked on a journey from which they might never return. The place I had summoned them to could have been a death trap.

Nevertheless, they rode the magic circle I had prepared at the Cultural Arts Center and bravely plunged into this harsh battlefield. I couldn't thank them enough.

“Now that our reunion is over,” Mia said as she took out a rope and a candle from her backpack, for some reason. Wait, hadn't she already discarded those?

“Tamakichin needs to be punished for accidentally sending Kazucchi flying like that during the battle.”

“Oh, um, I'm sorry about that! But wait, I've already been scolded enough by Shikisan,” Tamaki said.

“You don't seem remorseful enough... Kazucchi,” Mia said, looking at me. I shrugged my shoulders.

“Don't hurt her too much.”

“Huh? You stopped me when it was Arisu, right? Kazusan, you're treating me differently...”

Tamaki panicked, and Mia approached her with the rope, prompting Tamaki to run away. While the two of them played tag, I turned to Arisu.

“So, Arisu, both of you are at Level 20 now, right?”

“Yes. After I parted ways with you, we went down the left passageway and fought outside...” Arisu told me the details of the past two hours.

The girl embedded in the Globster was alive, but even healing magic couldn't restore her. She remained like a shell, unaffected by Cure Mind.

“Shikisan saw that and...” Arisu stopped speaking and looked down.

Then she whispered in a small voice, “She killed her.”

I nodded, understanding what Arisu meant.

Shikisan had acted on her words, just as she had told me before. I looked up at the ceiling, picturing Shikisan, who showed mercy to a deranged student while gritting her teeth.



Is that okay? There wouldn't be any reason to live, that's for sure. In the end, it would only make things harder for the Cultural Arts Center and get in the way...

“Don't lay a hand on me or Tamaki-chan,” I said, echoing something Shiki-san would say. I wanted to express my gratitude to her for trying to protect Arisu and Tamaki.

It may be selfish, but they are more important to me than anyone else.

Afterward, they went down the left passage of the cave.

There was a beehive at the dead end, but it wasn't a hive with a queen bee. Instead, it was a breeding ground where girls were captured and used to breed bees.

“A breeding ground?” Mia returned after hearing that word, expressing her disappointment.

“Do you want to hear more about this story?” Arisu asked.

“Kazu wants to know a lot,” Mia replied.

Hey, don't speak for me without my permission. I thought that, but I felt it would be good to listen to this. It could shed light on the orcs' actions.

According to the girl who was saved, she was temporarily swallowed up by the Globster's tentacles and found herself in the left room. Her whole body was paralyzed, and she realized she was giving birth to monster bees. More than half of the babies died during birth.

Shiki-san apparently cut open the stomachs of the surviving girls and disposed of the bees before they were born. Arisu used healing magic on the girls afterward. In the end, only three of the prisoners survived with their sanity intact.

“Also, this...” Arisu took out a jewel from her pouch. Inside were several blue jewels that had been collected up until now.

These were items Shiki had collected. No matter how much I thanked her, it never seemed enough. Laugh at me all you want for being a “cash guy.”

“There's even one yellow jewel,” Arisu said.

“When I defeated the Globster...” I realized even the Globster dropped a yellow jewel. “Yellow jewels are worth 100 red jewels in value.”

“100 tokens?”

That's amazing. Well, is it amazing? Mekish Grau, with all those enemies defeated, only has two yellow jewels. That's like the worth of 200 orcs. Oh, come to think of it, I wonder how much experience Mekish Grau has.

“Hmm. Since I haven't leveled up, that means its level is 42 or lower.”

“Oh, did Mia calculate it accurately? Arisu, Tamaki, what about you guys?”

“We have a record of the enemies we've defeated. Since Sakura-chan from the other party defeated the Globster, I think it's probably accurate, but...”

Then, we all put our heads together and double-checked with our university notebooks...

“Hmm, is it roughly in this range?”

“Looks like it...”

“Yeah, that's right.”

“Mm, as long as Kazucchi didn't make a mistake in the number of enemies he defeated, it's probably correct.”

Towards the end of the battle in town, Mia was busy persuading the people. If I got the number of Hobgoblins I crushed with my catapult wrong, the calculation would be off. But probably, there are no mistakes... hopefully.

“So, Mekish Grau's level is... 41 or 42.”

Over level 40, huh? We all sighed deeply.

“That's gotta be strong. Even the General, who was the strongest so far, was probably under level 20.”

“It's surprising to suddenly have an enemy that's more than twice the level.”

Tamaki, who had been fighting against enemies twice her level for a long time, even though she was somewhat at a disadvantage, laughed cheerfully.

That battle... I couldn't see the swordsmanship of the white sword Tamaki was wielding at all. Even at Rank 8, I wonder what would happen if she became Rank 9.

"So, what is Mekish Grau?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah, I think it might be the final boss," Mia replied.

"Ah, that would be great, but..." I briefly explained the story I heard from the soldier to Tamaki and Arisu.

"Those are mass-produced soldiers...? Ugh, what is that?" Tamaki expressed her disgust.

"I don't even want to think about there being many of them," Arisu added.

Their reactions were understandable. Mia shrugged her shoulders.

"Having more enemies is never a good thing."

"It seems to be just a myth, but we don't know if there are really many of them. The bigger problem is that even if we become Rank 9, we will only be barely equal to that class of enemies in close combat," I explained.

And that's only in close combat. We had no chance at long range. We were able to approach the enemy this time because there were no other obstacles, but if there were more obstacles, it would be tough. No, not tough. It would be worse than that. There's also one more thing.

"If an even stronger enemy appears, we won't be able to handle it," I pointed out.

Mia gave me a resentful look and said, "I was trying not to think about that..."

Even if she said that, it was still a problem.

"Until now, I thought if we became Rank 9, we could fight evenly with a demon lord-like character if one appeared, but it seems that's not the case."

"MMOs are where the real game starts after you reach the max level," Mia remarked.

Come on, brain, switch to game mode. No, wait, is this an MMORPG...?

“That kind of game, after reaching the level cap, you collect rare equipment and power up, right?”

“Hmm, it depends, but the usual way is to hunt strong monsters in raids and get better gear. Then you can hunt even stronger monsters. And the power creep continues.”

So, we have to focus on getting better equipment from now on?

“Well, there's also the option of paying to get limit breaks and stuff.”

“I wonder if we can do something with the Mia Vendor?”

The Mia Vendor has new items, but unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be anything like limit breaks. Besides, even with the tokens Arisu and the others brought, we only have 300 points. The ones we picked up from the town battle are just over 100 points. We defeated Mekish Grau earlier, which was worth 200 points, so that's a total of 600 points. But that's not enough to buy anything really good. And even if we duplicate items, there's nothing worth duplicating right now.

The bee attack has ended. Now, the focus is on going around the school facilities in the middle school division with Sakura's unit and taking care of the remaining orc forces. The general is probably not around anymore, so if we keep at it steadily, we should be able to pacify the west side of the mountain by the end of the day. At the very least, we want to secure the warehouses with food and other supplies.

I see. Shiki-san seems to have a good grasp of the defense situation at the Cultural Arts Center. The only concern now is the situation in the high school division...

“Someone once came on an errand from Mia's older brother. She was a beautiful woman with big breasts!” Tamaki says with a very happy expression.

“Huh? Mia's brother... is he a nice person?”

“No, it doesn't seem to be like that,” Mia clicks her tongue. Yes, she wanted some gossip, I understand.

“The high school division is currently divided into two factions and in the process of clearing out the orcs.”

“Two factions?...”

“The survivors who barricaded themselves in the boys' dormitory, and a group led by Mia's older brother.”

I nod in understanding. So, as promised, Yuki-senpai had gathered the remaining forces of the high school division.

Perhaps the reason why the survivors from the boys' dormitory are still holding out is because they have greater numbers.

“So, take your time and enjoy your honeymoon,” Shiki-san must have noticed, so this was a considerate gesture to allow Tamaki and Arisu to leave the Cultural Arts Center without feeling guilty.

Mia meets my gaze and slowly nods.

Yeah, unfortunately, there's no time to relax.

There's no doubt something urgent is happening in this world. Otherwise, the lord wouldn't have come up with such a crazy strategy that sacrifices the people as bait.

At first, I too doubted the lord's sanity. Was he willing to sacrifice the entire town just for his own safety? But when the lord's troops intercepted the orcs at Mekish Grau...

I somehow understood.

What I saw there was an infinite hatred towards the enemy.

It was a feeling of unyielding hatred unleashed upon the orcs by the children we had saved, including Nagatsuki Sakura.

“First, let's talk to the people in the town a bit more.”

“Yeah, that's a good idea.”

After congratulating each other and discussing a few things, we return to where we came from.

Back to the broken town and the land where the people who had barely escaped were waiting.

ARISU	
LEVEL: 20	SPEAR ART: 6
HEALING MAGIC: 5	SKILL POINTS: 4

TAMAKI	
LEVEL: 20	SWORDSMANSHIP: 8
PHYSICAL: 1	SKILL POINTS: 3

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We find ourselves back in the grasslands, where a solitary hawk gracefully dances in the vast expanse of the blue sky, seemingly yearning for escape. Not a single bird can be seen apart from this majestic creature. The fierce battle that had unfolded earlier has driven away all the animals in the vicinity. However, the hawk continues to leisurely twirl in the air, tracing broad arcs as if it were carefully observing its surroundings.

Suddenly, a recollection flashes through my mind—I had once employed a crow for aerial reconnaissance. Indeed, the hawk's movements bear a striking resemblance to those of the crow when I used it for bird's eye view reconnaissance. My focused gaze fixated on the hawk doesn't go unnoticed by Mia, who calls out to me.

Mia notices my unwavering stare at the hawk and reaches out to me inquiringly. I express my curiosity and concern to her.

“Hmm, then... should I try calling it?” Mia suggests.

“Ah, you think it will work?”

Mia nods, utilizing her rank 3 wind magic, “Whisper Sound.” This spell, previously used by the hobgoblins we encountered, enables the transmission of voices to distant targets. Mia possesses the ability of Many Tongues, which suggests that if there is someone capable of commanding the hawk, they should be able to hear her voice and respond.

In my case of bird's eye view reconnaissance, I cannot perceive the voice or exercise control over the subject through remote viewing alone. Achieving such capabilities necessitates the use of a rank 8 summoning magic called “Remote Control.”

However, to my astonishment, the hawk promptly acknowledges Mia's call. It descends gracefully, encircling above our heads before eventually coming to a halt.

Mia, emulating the gestures of a hawk trainer, extends her arm, and the magnificent bird alights upon her outstretched hand.

“Nice to meet you, traveler from another world,” the hawk utters, its voice resonating with the timbre of a young woman.

Chapter 91: Feast

We depart from the grasslands, bearing the visible scars of a fierce conflict, and make our way towards the hill, carried by an enchanting flight. Along the journey, we listened to the story of the hawk, or rather, of the person who sends his voice through it. The hawk, confirmed to be a familiar, now finds itself cradled gently within Mia's hands.

“We are the Aura Flora, also known as the People of Light in the human language. We are the guardians of the World Tree. My name is Leen Landar Color Kumuura La Flarm Sa...”

“Wait, wait, could you please shorten your name?” Mia interject.

“In that case, please call me Leen,” the hawk promptly replied.

“Okay, got it. Good birdie, good birdie,” Mia chimes in, interrupting the formal introduction and affectionately caressing the hawk's head. The bird appears somewhat dissatisfied, yet closes its eyes contentedly.

“Wait, this hawk is my servant. You can't just do that. Ah, wait, wait, hold on, hey!” the hawk interjected, attempting to reinstate its authority over the situation.

The hawk emits peculiar noises. Could this person be engaging in empathic synchronization? It feels reminiscent of a level 8 sympathy spell, a branch of magic I have yet to master.

“Look, Kazu, it's so cute. Come and see,” Mia exclaims, turning towards me with a wide grin. Hold on a moment, this bird holds valuable clues, so let's refrain from such distractions.

The hawk flutters its wings and breaks free from Mia's grasp, soaring back into the sky. Oh no, it seems we might have angered it.

“I'm sorry, please forgive me! So, can we have the information please?” Mia tries to cover up her slip-up.

“Mia, come on...”

“But it was making such adorable sounds,” Mia protests.

As we reach the summit of the hill, we find ourselves encircled by people who have sought refuge from the town. It appears that their jubilation has reached excessive heights, likely due to their victory over Mekish Grau. Arisu and Tamaki, in particular, who dealt the final blow, have garnered considerable popularity. The locals express their gratitude by bowing, raising their hands up and down, and shedding tears.

“Oh, Goddess of Fate Al-Sazal, we extend our profound gratitude for your divine guidance. Servants of the esteemed sorcerer, valiant Valkyries, may the protection of the God of War Gargos be upon us,” a voice exclaims.

Gargos for Al-Sazal, the Goddess of Fate for the God of War. These people's beliefs resemble those of ancient Greek or Roman polytheistic religions... Hold on a moment. The esteemed sorcerer... Could there be a misunderstanding here?

From their perspective, Arisu and Tamaki might merely be seen as familiars I have summoned. Mia straightforwardly clarifies that the two are human, which surprises and confuses the crowd.

“Are you suggesting that humans like us can combat divine weapons of that magnitude?”

“Yup, they can fight. That's the power of the esteemed sorcerer Kazu,” Mia confidently responds.

The crowd begins to buzz with excitement.

“Hey, don't make random claims,” I interject. Certain terms have piqued my interest, such as divine weapons.

I quickly explain that Arisu and Tamaki possess extraordinary abilities and attempt to attribute the people's gratitude to them. The crowd rekindles their admiration for Arisu and Tamaki.

“Hey, Kazu-san, what are these people talking about? What's going on?” Tamaki rolls her eyes, clearly perplexed.

Oh no, I forgot. I should also cast a Many Tongues spell on Arisu and Tamaki.

“Now you can communicate with these people,” I inform them.

“Yay! Thank you, Kazu-san! Ah, wait, waaah!” Arisu and Tamaki are greeted with an overwhelming flood of words and warm welcomes. Well, whether I comprehend the words or not, it matters little.

Soon, Arisu notices a wounded individual among the locals and glances briefly at me.

“Arisu, could I ask you for medical assistance?”

“Yes!” Arisu eagerly proceeded to tend to the injuries of the local people, showcasing her skills in healing.

Meanwhile, high up in the sky, the hawk continued its agitated circling. It seems there is little we can do to appease it. The sun has reached its zenith, and hunger suddenly grips me. However, with the absence of any immediate danger, I decide to indulge.

“Summon Feast,” I utter.

In an instant, a long table materializes atop the hill, adorned with delectable dishes arranged upon a pristine white tablecloth. The sight is truly mouthwatering—whole roasted bird, a bowl brimming with vegetable salad, creamy white soup, succulent roast beef, dishes resembling paella and pizza, a mountainous heap of potato salad, and more. Refreshments are also available, including water, wine, beer, and fruit juice. The spread is sufficient to satiate a hundred people.

Under the expansive blue sky, a grand banquet materializes before our eyes in a matter of moments. I beckon the astonished locals to join us and partake in the feast together.

I refrain from summoning the Servant team, as it would unnecessarily deplete my magical power. Even if they were present, they might hesitate in the presence of butlers or maids.

The meal commences. Arisu and Tamaki, having apparently finished their initial servings, now delicately nibble on the salad. Although Tamaki stealthily

reaches for the roast beef, I choose to turn a blind eye, even if she indulges to the point of being unable to move...



“Well, it just looked so delicious! It was so tasty!” Tamaki exclaims, clearly enjoying the feast.

“O-okay, eat as much as you want. You've been exercising a lot anyway. I still have 7 MP left, so if necessary, I can summon one more set,” I reply, trying to accommodate her appetite.

“Eh, that's just... impossible...” Tamaki responds, seemingly taken aback by the offer.

Taking a moment to observe the survivors, I note that there are 87 individuals, including three soldiers, around 10 elderly people, and over 30 children. With most of the able-bodied men having been lost in the recent battles, their survival in this situation becomes a pressing concern. I remind myself that it is crucial to consider their future and how they will sustain themselves.

Attracted by the aroma of the food, a hawk descends and perches on the edge of the table. Arisu scoops some meat onto a plate and starts nibbling on it. The hawk watches them with what seems like contentment. Its black eyes appear to absorb their presence, or perhaps it is the focused gaze of someone hidden behind the hawk.

“I want to talk about something important, Kazucchi,” the hawk says, addressing me.

“Wait a minute. That's a nickname Mia gave me. Um, please call me Kazu,” I interject.

“Okay, Kazu. Let me get straight to the point. Would you come to the World Tree?” it asks, prompting my curiosity.

The World Tree... a term commonly associated with fantasy lore. Is it a colossal tree? Can one revive merely by touching a leaf, or is it more akin to a space elevator? Before delving further into Mia's question, I turn to the soldier who had been enthusiastically chewing on his meat. He had previously informed me about Mekish Grau.

“Do you have any knowledge about the World Tree?” I inquire.

“Yes, Lord Archmage. It is said to be the realm where the subhuman race known as the People of Light resides. They claim to be the guardians of the Tree of the Beginning, a towering tree that stretches high into the sky. However, no one has actually laid eyes on such a colossal tree. If it truly existed, it should be visible even from a great distance...” the soldier responds, providing some insight.

“I see. So this world has a well-defined curvature radius, huh,” I remark, musing over the soldier's words.

“What's wrong with curvatura...?” the soldier trails off, appearing bewildered.

“Well, it doesn't matter if you don't know. Whether the earth is flat or spherical doesn't seem to matter now. Anyway, demi-humans... hmm. There's probably some racial discrimination involved. But before that, I wonder what kind of people demi-humans are. Hey, hey, does Leen have long, pointed ears or something like that?” I inquire, hoping to gather more information.

“No, I don't, but... please wait, don't come any closer,” the hawk responds cautiously as Mia approaches. In response, the hawk flaps its wings and lands on the grass, determined to maintain a safe distance.

“Tch, so you're not an elf after all,” Mia mutters, slightly disappointed by the revelation.

“Wait, Mia. Just because she doesn't have elf ears doesn't mean she's not an elf,” I interject.

“Hmm, I see. Then how tall is Leen?” Mia asks, hoping to uncover more details about her nature.

“Well, that's...” the hawk falls silent, seemingly grappling with some complex thoughts.

“If you meet me, you'll know,” the hawk responds, its voice implying that meeting is a possibility.

“Do you live nearby, Leen-san?” I inquire.

“No, it would take more than a month to walk from here,” the hawk replies, making it clear that meeting in person would be challenging.

“In that case, it would be difficult to go meet her...,” I mutter, contemplating the logistical challenges.

“I will activate the teleportation gate. I have prepared delayed activation magic for this familiar,” the hawk declares.

The teleportation gate... the phrase strikes a chord, reminding us of the grotesque and terrifying entity known as Globster. It was the being that had transported us to this place and summoned Mekish Grau.

“If we use that, we can teleport to the World Tree from here, right?” I inquire, hoping for confirmation.

“That's correct,” it confirms.

“Is the World Tree a safe place?” I question, seeking to understand the potential dangers.

The hawk falls silent, causing frustration to well up within me. “Hey, you're going to stay quiet there?” I remark, feeling a sincere urgency for answers.

“Well, it's a sincere attitude, but... Leen-san, could you please explain the dangers we might encounter at Yggdrasil?” I request, turning to the hawk.

“Yes. Currently, we are under a massive monster attack,” the hawk finally responds, shedding light on their predicament.

Ah, I see. So they seek our assistance, I surmise, recognizing the need to weigh the risks and responsibilities that await us at the World Tree.

“If that's the case, we might be able to fight together,” I respond, considering the possibility of joining forces.

Taking into account the hawk's knowledge of the world's geography, they might be able to help us find our way back to the school mountain. Even if they don't possess exact information, gathering intelligence could prove invaluable. Combining the hawk's reconnaissance abilities with the teleportation gate, we could potentially return to the Cultural Arts Center swiftly.

However, our ability to fend off the monster attacks and ensure our safety is a critical factor to consider. I shudder at the thought of encountering a foe stronger than Mekish Grau.

“How large is this attack you mentioned?” I inquire, seeking a clearer picture.

“About 20,000 monsters, mainly orcs,” the hawk responds, revealing the daunting scale of the assault.

I pause, taken aback by the overwhelming number of enemies. “Um, how many of you are there?” I ask, hoping to gauge their fighting strength.

“Our army consists of 2,000 soldiers skilled in forest battles, 1,000 survivors from other areas seeking refuge, and 2,000 animals such as wolves and bears,” the hawk reveals, surpassing my expectations.

Bears and other creatures are undoubtedly stronger than orcs. With their substantial forces, they might be able to hold their own in the forest, but uncertainties persist.

Among the demons, there are individuals of exceptional strength. From our past encounters, we have witnessed elite orcs, general orcs, and...

“Are there any monsters there as strong as Mekish Grau?” I inquire, hoping to ascertain the level of threat.

“We have not confirmed the presence of divine-level individuals, but there is a possibility of encountering an entity comparable to Mekish Grau,” the hawk responds, providing crucial information.

“Is there a possibility of something even more formidable?” I press further.

“There is a possibility,” the hawk admits, not shying away from the difficult questions.

“I see,” I nod, glancing at the soldier next to me who appears lost in thought. I turn to Arisu, Tamaki, and Mia, seeking their input.

Arisu nods with a smile, displaying her willingness to confront the challenges ahead.

Tamaki, busy with her meal, seems unfazed by the conversation and remains focused on her food.

Mia, on the other hand, watches us intently, as if placing her trust in our decision-making.

“Can we repel the demon army even without superior strength?” I ask, considering our options.

There's a brief pause before the hawk responds, “To be honest, I don't know. If a divine-level individual is deployed, we will undoubtedly face great difficulties.”

“So, you're seeking our help,” I deduce, realizing their underlying intentions.

“Yes, we would greatly appreciate your assistance,” the hawk confirms, their straightforwardness evident.

They have been honest and direct throughout our conversation. It seems they don't have the luxury of wasting time on negotiations or playing games. Their sincerity shines through.

In light of the information presented, we find ourselves at a critical juncture. The decision to assist them carries significant weight and implications for our own survival.

In light of the situation and the sincerity displayed by the hawk and their group, I decide to make a straightforward request.

“May we take all the survivors of this town with us? We don't want to leave them behind. It would be best if you could protect them, but...” I express our desire, aware of the challenges it presents.

“Of course, we were planning on accepting them even if everyone else refused,” the hawk responds, surprising me. I had anticipated some hesitance on their part.

Confused, I question their motivation, “Why? I thought you might be hesitant. They are not a reliable military force and could potentially be burdensome.”

“They are important for rebuilding the world after the war,” the hawk explains, shedding light on their perspective.

Ah, I understand. Gathering even a small number of survivors is crucial for the future. It seems they are considering the long-term consequences and not just immediate military strength.

Curious about the strange nature of our conversation, I turn to Mia, seeking her opinion. She nods knowingly, indicating that she understands my concern.

“The world was on the brink of destruction. The only hope, the last fortress of humanity, was the World Tree, right?” Mia confirms my thoughts.

We direct our attention back to the hawk, seeking further clarification.

“Currently, there are estimated to be seven bases on this continent capable of fighting against monsters. The World Tree is one of them. Most of the land on this continent has been occupied and destroyed by monsters. We humans are being driven out,” the hawk reveals, leaving us in shock.

It's worse than we had imagined. The situation is dire, and the world is on the verge of collapse.

Numerous questions flood our minds. What do the monsters seek to achieve? What kind of war is unfolding?

We are left with two choices: deeply involve ourselves in the battle of this world or turn away and focus solely on protecting the Cultural Arts Center.

“Mia, even if we run now, it would be futile, right?” I ask, already aware of the answer.

“I know. In essence, we have only one choice. But everyone's opinion still...” I pause, contemplating the weight of the decision.

“Opinion?” Mia responds, curious.

I turn to Mia, seeking her understanding and support. “Arisu-chan and Tamaki-chan, are they still not willing to follow Kazucchi even in this situation?”

After our decision was made, Arisu and Tamaki both nodded in agreement. Arisu nodded seriously, while Tamaki nodded while still enjoying her meal, sauce smearing her mouth. I chuckled and said, “Okay, take your time eating. After all, you never know when you'll get a chance to eat slowly again.”

I turned back to the hawk and conveyed our decision. “Okay, got it. Please open the transfer gate after the meal. We'll take all the willing survivors from here and pass through the gate. And yes, all of us will go.”

The hawk expressed its gratitude, calling me “Archmage Kazu.” I quickly corrected them, saying, “Just call me Kazu. Please refrain from unnecessary titles.”

In the end, all the surviving people in the town chose to accompany us to the World Tree. It was clear that staying here would make survival difficult, so they decided to bow their heads to the demi-humans and seek refuge there. The stout lady who was scolding the soldiers earlier laughed, acknowledging their duty.

I reminded everyone to avoid provocative attitudes and discrimination towards the demi-humans. It was essential to foster a harmonious relationship with our new hosts.

I dismissed all the familiars, a gesture of sincerity towards our destination. Only Arisu, Tamaki, and Mia remained by my side.

“Then, I'll open the transfer gate,” I declared, preparing for the teleportation.

The hawk landed in the center of the hilltop, spreading its wings wide. A pale blue light emanated from it, enveloping the nearly 100 people present.

As we passed through the gate, dizziness and nausea overwhelmed us. It felt like being swallowed by a colossal vortex, reminiscent of our initial encounter with Globster.

Chapter 92: City in the Forest

After the teleportation, we found ourselves inside a cylindrical hall. It was dimly lit and spacious, with a diameter of about 100 meters. Arisu, Tamaki, Mia, and approximately 90 people from the destroyed town looked around nervously. I joined them in surveying the room. The walls were constructed of rough-textured wood, and windows designed to collect sunlight illuminated the space with a soft glow.

Several figures stood near what appeared to be the entrance, their expressions obscured by backlighting. Tall individuals acted as guards around a central woman, but something peculiar caught my attention about their silhouettes.

“Animal Ears!” Mia exclaimed, her voice filled with excitement. She swiftly ran towards them as if flying, catching the attention of the burly guards. Anticipating an attack, they braced themselves, but Mia skillfully evaded their defenses with her level 5 swordsmanship-like movements. She leaped towards the woman they were protecting, touching the ear on top of her head that stood upright, resembling a cat's ear. It became clear that the woman also possessed a tail.

Realization dawned upon me as I watched the scene unfold. “Ah, I see. So that's it...”

The woman let out a scream, which was notably different from the hawk-like voice we had heard earlier. It was clear that the person making hawk noises had a higher-pitched voice. The men around the woman panicked and attempted to pull Mia away as she continued stroking the cat-like ear. Chaos ensued.

I quickly urged Arisu to intervene. “Arisu, go catch her!”

Arisu swiftly maneuvered between the men, grabbing Mia by the nape of her neck and lifting her up. Mia, in response, let out a cute meow. I couldn't help but remark, “Don't give a bad impression to people you've just met.”

Mia retorted, "I can't help it. I'm a furry lover."

I couldn't help but chuckle. She truly lived up to her reputation as the ninja's sister. The woman Mia had attacked was now crouching, holding her head with both arms. Arisu bowed apologetically to the woman, while the men stood around, unsure of how to react. However, it was evident that they were wary of Mia. Their tails stood up straight, and the ears on top of their heads trembled nervously.

I realized that everyone present in this place were demi-humans, often referred to as beast people. It made sense now. Not only did they have ears on the sides of their heads like us, but they also had ears on top of their heads. I couldn't help but ponder about the evolutionary process that gave rise to such creatures.

Then, I noticed a rope in Mia's backpack, along with a collar and leash. I asked Mia, "Mia, are these for play or for animals?"

Mia responded mischievously, "Of course, they're for play."

I decided to play along and placed the collar around her neck. Tamaki, who was engaging in playful banter with Mia, gladly took hold of the leash. I instructed her, "Tamaki, if Mia starts causing trouble, let me know."

"Leave it to me, Kazu-san!" Tamaki cheerfully replied.

While Mia continued her playful antics with Tamaki, calling it "slave play" and the like, I approached the beast people with cat ears.

"My companion was incredibly rude. We will ensure that she apologizes properly later. Excuse me, could you please guide us to Leen-san's location?"

The men still appeared cautious, but they followed the lead of the women and gestured for us to follow. We made our way outside, where the view opened up, and sunlight poured down upon us. Squinting my eyes, I noticed a strong gust of wind blowing through. In front of us, there was a wooden path—or rather, a bridge.

A realization struck me. I finally understood our current situation. The cylindrical hall we were in earlier was located inside an incredibly thick tree, and this tree hollow was elevated more than ten meters above the ground.

The bridge we stood on was elevated at the same height as the tree hollow, connecting neighboring thick trees. These bridges intersected in various places, forming squares and houses nearby. In essence, it was a town in the treetops. The sight was both breathtaking and reminiscent of a scene from a movie.

“We have to go see Lady Galadriel!” Mia, wearing the collar around her neck, exclaimed. Her reaction was adorable, and I couldn't help but find it endearing. Yes, it was a reference to Lord of the Rings.

In my memory, after the battle with the fiery monster and emerging from the cave, there was a forest scene. In the dappled sunlight, a beautiful Elven queen appeared. As I looked around, men and women with cat or dog ears were walking on the wooden bridges. Occasionally, someone with long rabbit-like ears could be seen. Everyone had ears on top of their heads, although none resembled actual elves. Mia, however, seemed to be excited all on her own. She really had a knack for these things.

“I'm looking forward to seeing Lea-tan. Hehehe,” Mia expressed her anticipation.

I chided her, saying, “Stop calling her that and change your tone of voice.”

“Mmm, okay,” Mia replied obediently, shutting her mouth.

“Good job, you're a clever one,” I praised her as I gently petted her. She looked up at me with narrowed eyes, seemingly content.

The woman with cat ears, who had taken the lead, beckoned us to follow. We walked along the wooden bridges, with the people we had helped from the town trailing behind us.

The bridges creaked and swayed in the wind, which was quite unsettling. Tamaki tightly gripped the edge of my clothes, her fear of heights evident. I could hear the survivors from the town trembling in fear as they followed behind us.

In contrast, the people with cat ears seemed completely unfazed by the swaying bridge. Despite walking on an unstable surface, their bodies remained steady. It was truly impressive to see their adaptability to the environment. If it came to protecting this town, individuals like them would undoubtedly play a

significant role. With these thoughts in mind, still reeling from the recent urban warfare we had experienced, I continued to follow the woman with cat ears.

“So many surprising things are happening, I feel dizzy,” Arisu chuckled, expressing her amusement.

“Yeah, I feel the same. But Tamaki, you've been holding onto my clothes for a while now...” I remarked, realizing Tamaki's firm grip on my clothes.

“H-Hey, I'm scared of heights,” Tamaki confessed.

“But you were flying just a while ago,” I pointed out.

“If I'm the one flying, it's fine.”

Ah, I see. So, she had a fear of heights as well. I gently stroked Tamaki's head to comfort her.

“It's okay, just let me know if you need to go to the bathroom,” I teased, trying to lighten the mood.

“Kazu-san, that's mean!” Tamaki glared at me with teary eyes. For some reason, Arisu joined in, giving me a similar glare.

“Kazu-san, being mean is not nice.”

“Oh, yes, I apologize...” I gracefully bowed my head, even though the treatment felt unjust. Nevertheless, I continued to receive hostile looks from Tamaki.

“I knew it, our approach was wrong... Kazu-san, you should just ask Arisu honestly,” Tamaki commented.

“You're the same way, aren't you?” I replied.

“Well... yeah, I guess, but still! It just doesn't sit right with me!”

I understood his frustration, but Arisu's approach was indeed the correct one. There was nothing we could do about it.

At one of the intersection points where the bridge crossed, the group parted ways, guided by other soldiers. They would undergo an inspection before being allowed to rest and recover from their exhaustion.

I wondered what kind of inspection they were conducting. *Did they have disease inspections in this fantasy world?*

The soldier who had given me advice and the plump woman who had led the group waved their hands and encouraged us once more.

We continued walking for another five minutes until we finally arrived at a giant tree of uncertain age. This might be the World Tree, or perhaps there were other trees of similar size nearby. The forest was filled with giant trees. How did they manage to grow so many? Perhaps magic was involved.

In front of the tree's hollow, a woman with cat ears was speaking and bowing her head. Her tail, sticking out from her skirt, was stiff with tension, and her ears were upright.

That must mean the person inside is...

"Please come in," a bell-like voice called out from inside. I immediately recognized it as Leen-san's voice.

Leading the way, I entered the hollow of the tree. The interior was spherical, with a high ceiling. Orange magical lights were scattered at eye level along the wooden walls, providing illumination.

In the center of the room, a young girl sat cross-legged on a straw mat. She had dog ears and wore a costume resembling the clothing of the Ainu ethnic group. If you ignored her ears, she looked just like a Japanese person.

She appeared to be around 12 or 13 years old based on her height, but her calm voice suggested she might be older.

Ah, so that's why she dislikes the topic of height. Her hair and the fur covering her ears were black. Her eyes, which stared directly at me, were as red as blood.



“Thank you for waiting, visitor from another world. Allow me to introduce myself again. My name is Leen Landar Color Kumuura La Flarm Sa the Fourth. I am currently serving as the priestess of the world tree's guardian in this generation,” Leen introduced herself.

This time, Mia didn't interrupt. Well, if she said something unnecessary, I would have thrown her out...

Leen-san looked at me and murmured, “You have a good eye. The eyes of one who can make resolute decisions.”

I shook my head. That probably meant I could abandon people. The ability to choose who should live and who should die based on my own whims. In fact, I had survived these past three days by doing just that.

Back in middle school, Shiki-san and I had made unilateral decisions, selecting which girls would survive and which would die. I couldn't tell if she was praising me or not, so I nodded vaguely.

Leen-san seemed to sense my complicated emotions and urged me to come and sit with her. The cat-eared women were waiting outside. Only the four of us and Leen-san were present.

Cushions floated in the air, and four of them were arranged in front of Leen-san.

Was this magic? I couldn't see anything happening...

“Well then, what should we talk about first?” Leen-san asked as we sat down on the cushions in front of her. Her chest was meager. Was she really a child? And yet, she remained composed.

“First, let me explain the current situation of this world,” Leen-san said, looking directly at me. I felt like I was being drawn into her ruby eyes. The girl curled her lips sarcastically and then dropped a bombshell.

“Let me put it bluntly. This world will be destroyed tomorrow.”

Chapter 93: The Shrine Maiden, Leen

“What did you just say?” “The world will end tomorrow?” “What the heck!”

Mia looked up at me with a bewildered expression, as if asking, “What on earth are you talking about?”

“Sorry, I don't understand what you mean,” Tamaki, the leader of our party's special forces, chimed in, clearly perplexed.

Of course, she didn't. Anyone would be bewildered if they were suddenly told that the world was going to end.

“Is there any evidence?” Mia asked, seeking some sort of validation.

Leen nodded and said, “Yes, there was a divine oracle.”

A divine oracle. A message from the gods, huh? In this world of magic, the existence of gods and their communication with humans wouldn't be out of the ordinary. Earlier, I had heard the names of the Fate Goddess Al-Sazal and the War God Gargos from the people of the destroyed town. For them, the boundary between the world of humans and the realm of gods might be much closer. While discussing the credibility of a divine oracle might be futile here, what mattered was that the girl in front of us perceived it as such, and the People of Light were acting upon that perception.

“Okay, let's proceed with that for now. We should gather more information,” I suggested, urging them to move forward.

Leen-san seemed to have noticed our lack of enthusiasm towards the oracle. She nodded in agreement, as if understanding, and continued speaking.

“Of course, we don't plan to sit and wait for destruction. That's why we're fighting now.”

“Is the fight against monsters part of that plan?” I inquired.

“No, the fight against monsters is actually the key to saving this world from destruction.”

Suddenly, being told about the end of the world was confusing, and I struggled to grasp the concept. And now, on top of that, we were being told that fighting monsters held the key to saving the world? No, wait...

“Do you need an explanation about who our opponents, the monsters, are?” Leen asked, beating me to the punch.

Since we were attacked by orcs three days ago, the nature of these monsters has remained the biggest mystery. According to the Q&A on my notebook PC, they are referred to as monsters. When defeated, they transform into jewels, which can be exchanged as points or tokens in Mia Vendor. It's difficult to think of them as living creatures.

But these monsters attack humans indiscriminately. They not only kill but also subject girls to rape as soon as they see them. There are so many strange things about them. We have been thrown into battles against these monsters without anyone to answer our questions, fighting relentlessly.

“Please tell us more,” I said, nodding in agreement and clenching my fist on my knee, leaning forward. Arisu and Tamaki also followed suit, mirroring my gesture.

“First of all, monsters aren't originally creatures in this world. To put it another way, Kazu, they are like familiars you summon,” Leen explained.

“Familiars...? But familiars...”

“Yes, even if you defeat your familiar, it won't become a mana stone. This is because the method of summoning is different. Please think of it as a different magic used to call them,” Leen clarified.

“I see. That makes it a bit easier to understand,” I replied, feeling a sense of clarity.

“That's quite a lot of important information you just casually mentioned,” Mia interjected sharply.

Leen tilted her head while looking at Mia. “By the way, is this person Kazu's slave?”

Oh no, I had forgotten that Mia was still wearing her collar. Tamaki had it with her. It was natural to refer to her as a slave, but I suppose that was the norm in this world. I wondered if Leen would notice that Mia wasn't wearing her collar when she saw through the eyes of a hawk.

Well, let's clarify that point.

“This is just a game,” I firmly stated.

Leen seemed confused and glanced back and forth between me and Mia. Mia nodded in agreement.

“It's a common thing in our world. Don't worry about it,” Mia assured Leen.

“I see. I apologize for my mistake,” Leen said, bowing her head. In this world, bowing your head was apparently a gesture of apology.

Arisu looked at me and Mia with a troubled expression, urging Leen to continue.

“According to legend, long ago, when the gods still lived among us, an evil god, who has now been forgotten, established the magic of summoning monsters as copies of creatures from other worlds. As time passed and the gods left this land, the secret of summoning monsters with mana stones was buried in darkness... or so it was thought.”

According to her, monsters began appearing in this world only about a hundred years ago. A small country of the deceased human race gambled on their strength, seeking to gain power before being destroyed by a larger country. They obtained a secret art and a mana stone of exceptional purity from an unknown source and summoned the monsters.

The invading country was annihilated by the summoned monsters, and the small country suffered the same fate. The resurrected monster in this world was known to bring death and slaughter indiscriminately, showing no distinction between friend and foe. Other monsters apparently refer to this being as the Demon King. Well, calling it the “Demon King” might seem a bit foolish to our computer game generation. Comparing it to enemies like

Nobunaga, Alexander, or Genghis Khan... It's starting to make me feel less confident about our chances of victory.

Armies from countries across the continent were sent to defeat the Demon King. They were met with countless monsters summoned by the Demon King, including orcs, hobgoblins, giants, and others we've encountered before. Simultaneously, the land under the rule of the Demon King transformed into an otherworldly form, as testified by the soldiers who barely survived being brutally defeated and trampled before returning home. Did it become like a decaying sea or something of that sort?

The conclusion reached by the magicians was that the Demon King was transforming this world into an uninhabitable otherworld. As time passed, monsters began appearing all over the world—in forests, mountains, and grasslands. However, people honed their swords and magic to fight back. Both sides fought fiercely for their survival, and a considerable amount of time elapsed.

“About five years ago, the monsters began to move in an organized manner. Until then, they were at most groups of a hundred, but they started forming armies of a thousand or even ten thousand, posing a grave threat to humanity,” Leen explained.

From that point, the situation rapidly deteriorated. Human nations were systematically destroyed, one after another. Some panicked nations called for unity, but the monsters were faster than the states' attempts to unite. The area where humans could survive diminished rapidly.

Now, human settlements have been pushed back to only seven locations on the continent. By the way, when I refer to humans, I mean it in the broader sense, including not only the races we brought but also all demi-human races.

“And three days ago, three divine revelations were received,” Leen revealed.

“The first revelation predicted that the world would be destroyed in four days, which is tomorrow. The second revelation provided a method to prevent that from happening. I will explain it later. The third revelation mentioned the arrival of Visitors from another world. Joining forces with them is one of the means to avoid destruction.”

“So you were looking for us? With that hawk?”

“Yes. In addition to the person who found you, we have sent familiars to various places. One of them happened to discover the strange people who fought against Mekish Grau. They wore peculiar clothes and looked like only human races. Those few people defeated the divine soldier. We were convinced you were the visitors from the other world mentioned in the divine revelation.”

I lower my gaze to my school uniform I'm wearing. This outfit is quite strange. It has been imbued with magic, so its performance as armor is quite impressive... Arisu and the others are wearing gym clothes with bloomers. It's definitely not a warrior's attire.

“We came to this world because God assigned us to do this job of saving the world, right?”

“I don't know. However, based on the nuance of the divine oracle, I believe otherwise.”

Hmm, I see. I'm not sure how much Leen-san is telling the truth, though... As usual, it's unclear why our mountain ended up in this world.

As for me, I'm grateful to the entity that brought our entire mountain into this world. If that hadn't happened, I would have been doomed by now. But for Arisu, Tamaki, and Mia... And even more so for Shikisan and the others who are still fighting at the Iku-geikan.

Well, putting those emotions aside, if the divine oracle is true, then we have no choice but to cooperate with them, right? We are now in this world. We cannot be indifferent to its destruction. However, what about tomorrow? If the divine oracle was three days ago, then Leen-san and the others only had four days to spare. This is a very urgent matter.

Three days ago. For us, it was the day before we came to this world. Is there any connection between us coming to this world and that event?

“There are some things I would like to ask, is that okay?”

“Sure, go ahead.”

“Do you happen to know how we can return to our original world?”

“Well, it's hard to say without knowing how you arrived in this world...”

“Oh, I see. Well, let me explain what has happened in the past three days. I'll also talk about the mysterious stone pillar the orcs were guarding, which is likely the key to everything.”

As I explained, Leen became interested in the story about the stone pillar. The inscription on it was in the Lead Language, and the words I read were “coordinates fixed, spatial search, range limited.” However, we don't know what language it was written in, and the Lead Language only allows us to understand the meaning of the words.

“Do you remember what the characters looked like, Tamaki?”

“I have absolutely no recollection!”

Tamaki puffed out her chest proudly for no reason.

As expected, I don't remember either.

“It's probably a special magic language... What's strange is that after you arrived in this world, the orcs attacked your residence. It's almost as if...”

“Yes. It's possible that the monsters on this side are the ones who called us to this world,” I say, but it doesn't seem to make sense.

Why would the entity in the white room bring us here? If the master of the white room and the one who summoned us to this world are different, then who is responsible?

Lost in my thoughts, Arisu and Tamaki proceed to explain the white room to Leen.

According to Leen, the white room and our skill system are unique. It's astonishing to think that even a complete beginner could acquire enough power to defeat Mekish Grau in just two days.

I had anticipated it to some extent, but still... So, it's only us and the monsters who possess the skill system? If that's the case... could the owner of the white room have some connection to the monsters?

“Be careful, Kazu. Hasty judgments are not only unnecessary, but also harmful,” Leen cautions.

She's probably right. Besides, there are other questions I want to ask.

“Do you know the location of the mountain where we came from?”

“Currently, other familiars are scouring the entire continent for information. Based on your descriptions, it is believed to be located in the southeast, where Rock Birds inhabit. We will focus our search efforts there.”

Rock Birds, huh? I recall the scene I witnessed on the first day—a colossal bird carrying an elephant in its grasp. Some students who saw it from a distance might have identified it as a Rock Bird. It's a term that fantasy enthusiasts are likely familiar with.

“We will configure the transfer gate magic on the receiving side for the familiars, so you can return to the mountain.”

They're offering this without us even asking. No, by stating their intention to do so, they've made it a bargaining chip. We have no idea how far away this southeastern part of the continent is...

It would be a long journey on foot.

We've fought to survive, and we will continue to do so. If there's an inevitable decisive battle with the monsters tomorrow...

We will have no choice but to participate, whether we like it or not.

Therefore, Leen-san concluded that it wouldn't be a disadvantage to temporarily take us to the school mountain. We will definitely return to Leen-san. I won't be so foolish as to let fear hinder me from making necessary judgments. Trust is built precisely through conversations like this, where we weigh the costs and benefits.

Because there is a vested interest, I am trusted.

“Is there anything else you would like to ask on this matter?”

“No. Now, about the postponed event that will take place tomorrow...”

Just then, the commotion outside grows louder. I turn to look at the entrance, where I see beastmen rushing across the bridge in a chaotic manner.

“The monster invasion has resumed.”

It seems we have no time to leisurely continue our conversation.

Chapter 94: Secret Weapon

Upon hearing about the impending enemy invasion, Leen and I exchange glances, understanding the situation at hand.

"It's because you're relying on us as your fighting force that you've gone out of your way to accommodate us, right?" I ask.

"I wouldn't say 'forcing,' but currently we don't have the luxury of not asking those with power for help," Leen responds.

I gaze at each of my three companions, one by one.

"Arisu says she'll follow me anywhere," I state.

"I'll take care of it! I'll beat down anything that comes our way," Tamaki confidently declares.

As for Mia, she remains stoic and speaks in her usual curt tone. "Yeah. Let's do what we have to do, Kazu."

"Mia, you seem a bit different," I remark.

"Do I?" she responds.

"You seem more composed than before, compared to yesterday."

"If that's the case, it's because I've been by your side. I don't feel like I have to rush anymore," Mia explains.

I wonder what it means to feel rushed. I tilt my head in confusion.

Mia laughs and smiles slightly. "It's the feeling of wanting someone to acknowledge you."

"I'd be lost without you," I say, placing my hand on her head. Then, I turn to Leen.

"For now, let's put aside how much we believe in the prophecy. Realistically speaking, teaming up with the People of Light seems like the quickest way to

get back to the mountain. Therefore, it's only natural to help our allies.”

At least to the extent of pretending to help them.

At worst, we can achieve some results and then withdraw.

“Please use us. Where should we go?”

I nod once, untangle my legs, and stand up. Arisu and the others follow suit and stand up as well.

Leen-san sits down and claps her hands.

Suddenly, the back of the room, previously devoid of signs or decorations, undergoes a change.

The air trembles, and curtains materialize across the room.

No, they were probably already there. Perhaps they had been hidden by some kind of magic spell.

As I recover from my surprise, a thought occurs to me. “I see.” Leen-san appears to be sitting in front of us defenselessly, as if she completely trusts us.

In reality, it's different. Guards are waiting on the other side of the curtain.

Now that the magic has dissipated, a part of the curtain is lifted, revealing the hands of women who appear to be maids.

One woman passes through the curtain. She is slender, wearing comfortable-looking leather armor and a small sword at her waist. She appears to be around the same age as me.

She has white skin like a doll, silver hair, and ruby eyes. Her delicate body shape doesn't possess the characteristic 3rd or 4th ears of beastmen.

For a moment, I think she's human.

But soon, I realize she's not. It's because I catch a glimpse of her pointed, slanted ears through her silver hair.



“What is an elf?” I ask, breaking the silence. As soon as the words leave my lips, her blood-red eyes pierce me with a strong will. “Please call me Rushia, Kazu-sama,” she responds, leaving me gasping and overwhelmed.

Shaking my head, I gather my composure and meet her gaze again, this time not getting swallowed up as before. I nod once.

“Um... you don't have to call me 'sama,' Rushia-san.”

Rushia exchanges a brief glance with Leen, who is seated on a cushion. Leen smiles. “Rushia wishes to serve you now as a foot soldier. Please feel free to use her as a convenient subordinate. You can even use her up if you want.”

Wait, there's a word I can't ignore. First, what does “now” mean? And what does she mean by “use her up”?

“Until a month ago, she was a princess of a certain country and ranked 17th in line for the throne,” Leen explains.

A princess of the elves, perhaps?

I look at Mia, feeling bewildered. Leen slowly shakes her head.

“That country no longer exists. The country and the forest it existed in were destroyed by monsters. Its leaders, people, and even the trees were wiped out. Under our protection, she changed her name to Rushia, a word in that country's language that means 'finisher,' and hopes to settle the final fate of her clan. If her life can be used to defeat the monsters, that would be even better.”

I see, I understand now. She's like Nagatsuki Sakura. She may be irresponsible in a way due to her high status, but... it may not matter how she uses her own life for me.

In the end, the only ones I can protect are my companions, everyone in this party, and the people of the Cultural Art Center.

Earlier, I helped the townspeople because of the circumstances, but I couldn't protect all of them for long. If she foolishly goes towards the monsters herself, I can't stop her and I don't want to stop her either.

However, I don't want her to commit suicide while we're together. Even if someone calls me a disposable pawn, I can't abandon my summoned creature. I

don't need volunteers for suicide missions.

Summoning magic can't be used infinitely, can it? If you were watching our battle with Mekish Grau, you should know we don't need amateurs who have no combat experience interfering with us. They're just a hindrance.

Well, until recently, we were also amateurs ourselves. Mia is looking at me with a face that seems about to make a sarcastic comment. I ignore her because it's a fact that amateurs like her are a hindrance to us now.

No, probably, but... she's not the only one who's a hindrance. Based on their reactions to Mekish Grau, I doubt anyone in this Yggdrasil world can keep up with us in battle.

Maybe we... are very strong in this world. We're probably overwhelmingly stronger than them as a group. Leen looks up at me and smiles.

Oh, this is... I've been had, haven't I?

"Leen's face just now looked like Shiki's," Mia says.

Oh, stop saying unnecessary things, Mia. Your impression is exactly the same as mine.

"Please forgive me for what I have tried. I trust you to be the one who I can leave her to," Leen says, her tone sincere.

"What do you mean?" I ask, curious about her intentions.

She explains that she tested our character to see if we were suitable to entrust Rushia to.

"Well, let's just leave it at that. But then, what if Rushia can be useful to us?" I inquire.

"Rather than explaining in a hundred words, it would be better to show you evidence. Rushia," Leen responds.

Rushia nods in agreement and steps forward in front of me. She extends her right hand, and I, dumbfounded, extend mine in response. Our hands overlap, and I notice the same red, vague circle that exists in my right hand is also present on Rushia's pinky. It's a sign of becoming a party member.

“What does this mean?” Tamaki asks, blinking her eyes in confusion.

“Well, people in this world shouldn't be able to form parties...” Mia comments.

“In my country, we have repeatedly carried out special breeding to obtain power to fight monsters. Within the clan, there was a certain species that had the most success... which is me, Rushia,” Rushia explains.

“Breeding...” I mutter, trying to process the information.

“It was a special experiment that overlaps humans and monsters. The creation of a weapon that required a great sacrifice is now complete at this moment,” Rushia reveals, closing her eyes.

As we stand there in shock, our field of vision suddenly shakes, and before we know it, we have warped into a white room.

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In the white room, alongside the four of us, Rushia stands with a natural expression on her face. She looks around and murmurs, “I see. So, this is the Hall of Possibilities where the divine oracle was.”

Hall of Possibilities? I've never heard of that before. Well, now that she mentions it, I guess it's not a bad way to put it. Acquiring skills equals gaining possibilities, I suppose.

The white room, as usual, contains a fifth desk and chair, with a notebook PC set up. It must be Rushia's notebook PC.

“Rushia, can I take a look at your PC?” I ask, wanting to explore its contents.

“You mean the machine that's there, right? Please take a look,” Rushia responds, not recognizing the term “PC.”

I realize that Rushia may not be familiar with the concept of a personal computer. It makes me wonder if this entire room has been constructed to fit my perspective as the leader. It would explain why Rushia's data is displayed in Japanese on the PC screen, and her name is also “Rushia,” despite Leen mentioning she had a different real name. If this space is designed based on my

perspective, then it all starts to make sense. It's a level of understanding that I find difficult to accept otherwise.

Mia peers into the PC screen from my side and remarks, "Hmm. Level 1."

"So, Rushia formed a party in a level 0 state?" Tamaki asks.

"Ah, I see. By the way, how did she know about parties and such?" I add, curious about Rushia's knowledge.

Rushia calmly responds, "As the prophecy foretold."

Ah, a prophecy. That's convenient. It seems like anything goes when you leave everything up to the gods. But then again, with the existence of this room and these devices, it's hard to imagine this level of technology without assuming some kind of divine intervention or powerful magic.

"Did the prophecy say anything about us?" I inquire, wondering if we were mentioned in the prophecy.

"Alvana, who controls the forest, said that when the time comes, people from another world will give us power. I was born for that purpose and raised for it. My country was supposed to use my power to conquer the continent," Rushia explains.

Conquer the continent? I contemplate if the elf kingdom was a hegemonic state. However, I realize it may not be appropriate to apply our world's common sense to this situation.

Rushia shakes her head, dispelling my assumptions. "Before we could take action, a monster army took down our country. Probably because they were after my power."

Ah, I see. Yes, this power is incredibly dangerous. It was supposed to be unique to us, but Rushia was born in this world and yet exists within the same skill system as us. Judging by what I can see, her level is 1, and there isn't much difference between us in other aspects.

"Hmm, wait, Kazu. There's a window overlapping the skill," Mia points out, moving the mouse on Rushia's laptop to shift the overlapped window to the side.

A new window called “Special Ability” appears behind the main window. Two words are displayed in the Special Ability window: Mana Release and Level Up Suppression.

“So, this kid has both of these abilities...? Well, both of them seem amazing,” I remark, intrigued by Rushia's special abilities.

“Rushia-san, were you aware of this special ability called 'Mana Release'?” Mia asks.

“Yes. It's a secret technique developed by my country, which involves carving a special crest on the body to adjust the amount of mana released. The method of manufacture was lost with the fall of my country,” Rushia explains.

“But you're the only one who can use this ability,” Mia says, referring to Rushia's special ability.

We immediately engage in a Q&A session about special abilities, focusing on Rushia's special ability in particular. Here's a summarized version of the conversation:

- If you acquire a special ability displayed in the special ability window by some means, such as through Mia Vendor, this window will appear.
- Mia quickly runs to the Mia Vendor to check for new special abilities.
- However, Mia returns disappointed, stating that the special abilities are expensive. We decide to accumulate 2000 points before trying again.
- It makes sense that these special abilities would be expensive considering their usefulness.
- We share a chuckle as we understand the situation.

Chapter 95 Special Abilities

Moving on, I ask about three specific special abilities, and the response is swift. Here's what I learned:

- Magic Release and Mana Control are special abilities that allow the adjustment of magic power and MP consumption. For example, with Rank 3 Lightning, Rushia can release weak electric shocks with an MP consumption of 1 or much stronger ones with an MP consumption of 30. The maximum value that can be used is up to 10 times the original MP consumption.
- Level Up Suppression is an ability that delays the process of leveling up until a desired time. Rushia can choose to suppress leveling up, even if she kills monsters. She has already accumulated more than 60 Orcs worth of experience points using this ability. However, she can only release this ability once every 24 hours.
- Rushia is considering whether to level up to level 10 all at once or wait until the timing aligns with the 24-hour cooldown of the ability.

“Whether to invite her to join the party or not,” I contemplate out loud.

“Well, her special abilities are too useful. We should seriously consider teaching her Fire Magic or something,” Mia suggests eagerly, clearly excited by the prospect of acquiring powerful abilities.

I look at Rushia, and she responds, “I'll follow whatever you say, Kazu-sama,” reaffirming her trust and loyalty to me as the leader.

“Hmm? What did you say earlier about 'anything'?” I question Mia, reminding her that she had made a similar joke before. I playfully tap her head, and she returns to her carefree demeanor. Then, I turn to Arisu and Tamaki, wanting to hear their opinions, but their responses catch me off guard.

“U-um, me. If Kazu-san needs it, then, um, it's okay even if he has more mistresses!” Arisu stammers, expressing her willingness to accept such a situation.

“I think you should just embrace me if Kazu-san likes me,” Tamaki adds confidently.

Hold on a second. What kind of impression have I given them? It's rather pathetic that I can't completely deny the rumors, but...

“I heard Kazu-sama is an excellent magician. It is necessary for him to have many descendants. As a medical practitioner, I have received a seal of approval that my ability as a mother is above average. Fortunately,” Arisu chimes in, mentioning her qualifications as a mother.

What does she mean by “fortunately”? And what exactly is a medical practitioner? It seems like they use magic for healing in this world.

“For now, let's put aside the idea of having children... Also, please stop using honorifics like 'sama' when referring to me. Calling me by my first name is fine, or even just dropping the honorific altogether... Hmm,” I clarify, trying to establish a more casual and equal relationship.

I look at Arisu, Tamaki, and Mia, and I continue, “Let's stick to using honorifics like 'san.’ Also, please refrain from using excessive honorifics. Use the same level of formality as Arisu and the others.”

“Understood... I'll call myself Rushia then,” Rushia responds.

I can't help but wonder why she still uses honorifics when referring to me. Arisu and Tamaki also use them, to some extent. Mia calls me “Kazucchi,” but I address all of them by their first names. Perhaps it's because our previous dynamic was based on a seniority and juniority relationship. It's fine if they call me by my first name, though... Well, it's okay.

“I understand, Rushia. Also...”

“Are there any other orders?” Rushia asks.

“If possible, I'd like you to smile,” I request.

Rushia obliges and smiles, but there's something off about it. Her eyes seem empty, as if she's looking past me into the distance.

"I take it back. I don't need a perfunctory smile," I retract my request.

"I'm sorry," Rushia nods, but her tone lacks sincerity. It's hard to tell if she's teasing me or doing it on purpose.

"So, you've killed monsters before," I inquire.

"Yes. After the others made them unable to resist, I killed the monsters that were brought in repeatedly," Rushia answers.

"Hmm, I'm impressed by your power leveling, but it's not particularly noteworthy," Mia interjects.

"Why didn't you level up?" I ask, curious about her decision to withhold leveling up.

"I couldn't. According to the prophecy, I can only enter the Hall of Possibility by joining the same party as someone from another world," Rushia explains, shedding light on her inability to level up independently.

I contemplate this revelation. It appears that the Elf country had used the prophecy to bolster its military forces, and the God had also played a part. But what did it mean? Did the Elf God purposefully orchestrate Rushia's inclusion in our fighting force? Was she intervening to ensure our meeting? And if so, were there other beings like Rushia, manipulated into joining us? Questions flood my mind, and I can't help but feel suspicious. What were their true intentions? What did they want us to accomplish?

I find myself growing increasingly paranoid, questioning everything. However, I quickly shake my head, realizing the importance of dealing with the situation at hand pragmatically. Regardless of the God's motives, Rushia's abilities have proven to be invaluable.

Although we barely emerged victorious in our battle against Mekish Grau, it was evident that we hadn't faced the enemy's full strength. Rumors circulate that the defeated monster was just one of their soldiers. If multiple opponents of similar caliber were to appear simultaneously, I doubt we could emerge

victorious, even if we all raised our skill ranks to 9. In such a predicament, Rushia's presence could serve as a turning point.

“Kazu, be brave and say it. That you want her,” Mia interjects mischievously once again.

I respond with a nonchalant shrug. “Well...”

“And then grope her breasts,” Mia adds, making an unnecessary comment.

I roll my eyes. “Of course, I want Rushia, but only as a fellow soldier. I wouldn't demand her body.”

Rushia chimes in, “That's fine with me.”

“If I told you to die... Ah, sorry, never mind that,” I stumble over my words, realizing the absurdity of my hypothetical statement.

Based on their earlier exchange, the answer is clear. Rushia desires to fight. She is willing to join our party and fight until her last breath. In that case, it would be even more beneficial for Rushia to remain with us. She is a valuable asset, and as long as we are by her side, we can protect her.

I extend my right hand towards Rushia, surprising her. “This is...”

“It's a handshake. In our world, it symbolizes friendship,” I explain.

Rushia nods in understanding and hesitantly extends her right hand. We shake hands, and I notice that her hand, with its white porcelain skin, is surprisingly soft and warm.

“Please lend us your strength,” I implore.

“Yes, I will help as much as I can,” Rushia responds with a smile. This time, her smile appears much more genuine than before.

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I observe Rushia's attire and notice the sword hanging from her waist. Curious, I inquire, “Can you use a sword?”

“This isn't actually a sword. It's been specially crafted to appear as such, even for use in rituals...” Rushia explains. She places her hand on the hilt of the

sword-like object, draws it from its scabbard, and at first glance, it resembles a thin, black stick about the size of a finger. Just an ordinary stick.

Rushia twists her wrist, and in an instant, the stick bends and extends like a whip, becoming several times longer. Mia exclaims, “Wow!”

“A multi-segmented whip? No, it feels a bit different,” I remark.

“This is our country's unique magical tool called the 'Bone Whip.' By flowing mana, it can extend like a whip. Furthermore, by changing the flow of mana...” Rushia explains.

She swings the whip, focusing her mana. Immediately, the whip solidifies, and Rushia halts her weapon, which has now transformed into a staff over three meters in length. “Hmm. This is the legendary Galient Sword...” I comment.

“Is that what it's called in your world?” Rushia asks.

“No, it's not. While there are similar fictional weapons, it's impressive that you can freely switch between a staff and a whip,” I reply. Additionally, Rushia displays great skill with her weapon. If I improve my staff skills, I could also become a competent vanguard.

However, considering the potential of magic release, fire magic seems enticing. It has the capability to become our maximum firepower in the future. I ponder the options, contemplating their pros and cons.

Mia tugs at my sleeve and suggests, “Kazu, can I make a suggestion?”

“Ah, I see. Mia, as the representative of the gaming brain, let's hear your opinion,” I respond.

“Long-range firepower is justice. If you defeat enemies before they enter your range, even the toughest opponent is just trash,” Mia states.

I consider her words and realize their validity. Against formidable foes like Mekish Grau, who possess long-range firepower comparable to ours, victory becomes nearly impossible. However, when facing opponents like General, it's undoubtedly a sound strategy to eliminate them before they get too close. The same goes for giants. Taking the initiative and unleashing heavy firepower provides a significant advantage.

Until now, our main forces, Arisu and Tamaki, had to engage enemies in close combat. Mia's attack magic, chosen primarily for support purposes, doesn't possess significant firepower. As a result, our tactics have been somewhat limited.

Furthermore, our battles have primarily taken place around the school in the forest, causing our formation to be overly optimized for that specific environment.

"It's also a problem that our skills are too diverse at this stage. We should prioritize allocating all our points to fire magic," I agree with Mia's suggestion.

"What we need most is instant firepower and the ability to suppress a large area... I see. Mia, you're absolutely right. That's just right," I add, recognizing the importance of focusing on fire magic.

As Leen, she probably wants to keep an eye on us.

For us, if it's only for surveillance purposes, we're not interested. However, if it can turn us into a useful fighting force, that's a different story.

"That's a win-win for everyone," Mia remarks.

"A win? What does that mean, Mia-chan?" Tamaki interrupts.

Mia smiles and explains, "It means to win. We gain more allies and win, Rushia gets stronger and wins, and Leen keeps control over us and kills monsters, also winning."

"I see, we just need to win!" Tamaki responds enthusiastically.

Wait, hold on. That explanation is technically correct, but it's a little off.

I glance at Arisu, who murmurs with a distant look, "Tamaki-chan, you're not good at English."

I stroke Tamaki's head and chuckle. "You're really cute."

"Huh, what's wrong, Kazu-san? Why are you so kind?"

"Eh, somehow you're just really cute."

Rushia watches us playfully, looking puzzled with her eyes wandering in the air, giving off a somewhat lonely aura.

“By the way, Rushia, do you know anything about the prophecy stating that the world will end tomorrow?”

Rushia shakes her head. “I was supposed to hear the details from Leen along with everyone else at that specific time and place. All I know now is that it is related to the destruction of the world, and tomorrow's sunset is the deadline.”

“I see... Just out of curiosity, how accurate is this prophecy?”

“Do you doubt the word of God?” Rushia replies, appearing puzzled once again.

Oh, even she looks puzzled by that question. Well, I guess it's the kind of thing where it's hard to say for certain. Well, let's discuss it later in the white room. The battle in front of us takes priority.

“Well then, Rushia, please raise your skill rank.”

“Um...” Rushia looks puzzled as she stares at her notebook PC.

“Oh, right. People in this world don't know about computers. Mia, could you explain it to her?”

“Why me?”

“Well, you seem like the most likely person to have explained computers to friends or something.”

“Better than being a loner like Kazu-chan...”

Ugh, I'll cry if you say that.

Mia shrugged and turned to Rushia. “I'll teach you step by step.”

“Unnecessary skinship is prohibited,” Rushia reminded her.

Mia proved to be a better teacher than expected, and Rushia quickly learned how to operate the PC and gained the fire magic skill. We returned to our original location, and Rushia's level increased again. This time, she reached level 10 quickly and invested skill points into the fire magic skill. It was all about focusing on one point now.

Rushia: Level 10

Fire Magic: 5

Skill Points: 5

Chapter 96: The World Tree

We returned to the audience chamber that had been created in the hollow of the World Tree where we started. Leen and Rushia exchanged glances and nodded at each other.

“I'm glad, Rushia,” Leen said.

“It's all thanks to you, Leen,” Rushia replied.

Both of their expressions relaxed. They seemed to be very close friends.

Hmm, Leen, the representative of the Light Clan, was sending such close friends of ours to our party. Perhaps Leen was just using Rushia as a pawn, regardless of personal likes and dislikes. Nevertheless, her feelings for her friend Rushia were conveyed through her smile.

By showing me this, it meant she trusted us and it was a form of pressure. Or perhaps she was going beyond her role as a political leader, asking us to “please” take care of Rushia.

Either way, Rushia was an incredibly valuable asset for us.

In fact, I had no intention of giving her back. I wanted to keep her for myself.

“You need to head towards the 23rd district in the southwest of the forest. It seems one enemy unit has invaded from that direction,” Leen explained.

“How many are there, and what kind of monsters are they?” I asked.

“There are probably between 100 and 500 of them. As for the type of monsters, the information hasn't reached me yet. Please ask the front-line commander for details.”

I see, so there were less than 500 of them.

If all 500 were orcs, it would be similar to the group that attacked our mountain. But if there were 500 hobgoblins, along with the addition of general goblins, it would be impossible for us to handle.

“In general, the local forces will deal with it. I would like to ask all of you to be prepared in case there are any particularly strong monsters,” Leen requested.

“I understand.”

“Yeah, using it that way is probably the best. Although, if we want to gain experience points, it might be better to take down some weak monsters,” Mia suggested.

“Rushia, could you guide them to the transfer gate?” Leen asked.

“Understood, Leen. Then, let's go.” Rushia smiled, a very natural smile. Unlike her cold smile from earlier, her eyes relaxed as well.

“Oh, this girl can smile like this too,” I thought to myself.

We were going to use the transfer gate to head to the World Tree and then warp to a regional transfer gate from there. Rushia guided us to the transfer gate, and we followed her instructions, stepping inside the magic circle.

A robed soldier who had been waiting nearby sang a solemn song that reminded me of the Japanese national anthem. Before I could even wonder about it, the uncomfortable sensation unique to transfer gates cut off my consciousness.

Immediately after, the scenery around us changed. We found ourselves in a huge hall that was as big as a gymnasium. Numerous soldiers were present, teleporting out of the hall and walking briskly outside. We could hear the sounds of people making noise beyond the hall.

I realized that we were inside a massive tree. It seemed that all of the People of Light's cities were built within trees. Stepping outside, a strong wind blew, and I stumbled. My ears were ringing, and on the wind, I could hear a song that sounded like the sound of bells.

“Someone... is singing?” I questioned.

“Yes. It's to maintain the barrier,” Rushia explained from the back of our group. “This is a special barrier magic that isolates the World Tree from the surrounding space, making it impossible to enter or exit from anywhere other than this transfer gate.”

“A song?” I asked.

“Yes, but... this sound was more like the tone of a flute, yet it resonated like a song in my ears,” Rushia replied.

“Who could be making such an... inhuman sound?” I wondered.

“It's the World Tree. The World Tree is singing,” Rushia said calmly.

I looked at Rushia closely. She seemed unfazed by it all.

“This is a world of magic. It's not strange for a tree to sing,” Mia remarked.

“But Rushia, where is that World Tree?” I inquired.

“Over there,” Rushia pointed straight ahead.

At first, I could only see a green wall, but then I realized my mistake. It wasn't a single tree. My perception corrected itself, revealing the grandeur of the World Tree.

The World Tree, with its enormous size, appeared like an endless wall that pierced the clouds. It had a magnificent and unconventional appearance, giving the illusion of extending beyond the horizon. Originally cylindrical in shape, it resembled a colossal tree when viewed from a distance.

“So, this is... the World Tree,” I exclaimed, filled with admiration. I couldn't help but gasp and feel overwhelmed. A deep sense of awe coursed through me, making my spine tremble. In the face of such a phenomenon, I questioned how I should react, how I should approach a world where such wonders existed.

“It's huge,” Tamaki commented simply, in her usual manner. I couldn't help but feel inferior to her nonchalant response. My shoulders slumped involuntarily. Yes, I could only stand in awe with my mouth agape, trying to grasp the grandeur of it all.

“Rushia, let's go. To the battlefield,” I said, regaining my composure.

“Understood. This way,” Rushia replied, leading us across a bridge constructed in the treetops.

We decided to save the sightseeing and contemplation of the World Tree for later when we had more time. Our current focus was on the battle at hand. We

needed to defeat the monsters and aid the Light Tribe, our newfound allies.

Entering a hollow in another massive tree, we approached the transfer gate, ready to warp once again.

When we arrived at our destination after teleporting, we found ourselves in a crowded place. The powerful warriors of the Light Tribe emerged from the hollow and fixed their gazes on us all at once. I couldn't help but flinch under the weight of their collective stare.

They seemed to notice my unease, and a burly beastman with dog ears approached us with agility, crossing the suspension bridge effortlessly. He wore a mocking expression as he spoke.

“So, these are the reinforcements Leen-sama was talking about? These guys?” he sneered, glancing at me.

“What can a kid like you do?” His disdainful attitude reminded me of the Shiba's in some way, and it triggered unsettling memories from the past—a flashback.

“Uh-oh,” I trembled, quickly turning my face away. I couldn't afford to panic now. However, his condescending behavior seemed to fuel his sadistic tendencies even further.

“This guy's scared of me,” he remarked, stepping closer to me with each step.

“Uh-oh, I can't stop shaking,” I thought, feeling the fear intensify.

As the man with dog ears reached out to me, my hand was firmly held by Arisu on my right and Mia on my left. Their reassuring grip caused my trembling to subside.

“That's enough,” Arisu declared, lifting her head. I hadn't even noticed her movement, but Tamaki had swiftly unsheathed her white sword and pressed the blade against the man's neck. In an instant, the atmosphere shifted with Tamaki's actions.

Hot-blooded men, feeling insulted by our presence, started approaching from the other suspension bridges. We found ourselves in a plaza that opened up from a hollow tree, leaving us with no means of escape. Meanwhile, members

of the Light Tribe were converging on our location from three different directions across the suspension bridges.

Even if they all attacked us simultaneously, we were confident we could handle the situation without any issues. However, that wasn't our main concern at the moment.

“Kazu, are you still scared?” Arisu asked.

“Actually, I'm still pretty scared,” I replied with an awkward smile.

“Then let's run.”

“But...”

“Hmm, if we're not needed here, we'll go on our own,” Mia chimed in.

“Ah... okay.”

Mia was right. It would be more effective to demonstrate our abilities through action rather than trying to convince them with words. I couldn't blame them for underestimating me—I had been too frightened. I realized I wasn't suited to be a leader.

“For those who don't know you, Kazucchi, let them say whatever they want. Rushia, do you know the direction from which the enemy invaded?” Mia asked.

“Yes. Most likely, the village ahead was attacked... Are we going there?” Rushia inquired, clearly perplexed by the unfolding situation.

I nodded, resolute in my decision. It might have disappointed Rushia, but I was still the leader of this party.

“Irrespective of appearances, we must first weaken the enemy. We can handle it on our own without any casualties.”

I expected Rushia to say more, but she simply nodded in agreement. I cast the Deflection spell on Mia, and she extended the Fly spell to everyone. We took to the sky, leaving the astonished Light Tribe members behind, heading straight towards the enemy's location.

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After about 30 minutes, we landed in a bush and observed the village in the treetops, now consumed by flames. It seemed to be another dwelling place for the Light Tribe.

Were there any guards? And if there were, would they be as ineffective as the ones in the previous town?

As we observed the devastated village in the trees, it became evident that the defense force had been completely wiped out, and the villagers had either been killed or fled. Most of the bridges were burned, and flames erupted from some of the trees.

Amongst the chaos, we noticed figures moving among the trees and the remaining bridges. Their upper bodies resembled pale-skinned humans, but their lower bodies were comprised of spider legs—six of them.

“Arachne,” Mia murmured before Rushia had a chance to speak. She was trying to manipulate the natural language system, opting for a name we could easily comprehend rather than an unfamiliar proper noun like Mekish Grau.

Rushia confirmed, “Yes, those are monsters called Arachne.”

Mia grinned mischievously, knowing she had influenced the conversation.

Chapter 97: Battle in the World Tree Forest - Part 1

“Arachnes spit out spider threads from their mouths to capture their prey. They possess high agility and can leap from tree to tree,” Rushia explained, observing one of the Arachne monsters from a distance. It seemed she had acquired knowledge about them but had never seen them in person until now.

Based on the explanation, it appeared that Arachnes were specialized forest monsters.

“The spider threads are vulnerable to fire, and the Arachnes are more proficient with bows, arrows, and spears compared to the soldiers of the Light Tribe,” Rushia continued.

So, the Arachne's weapon rank would be around 3.

“Come to think of it, I didn't see anyone fleeing on our way here,” someone remarked.

Rushia explained, “The teleportation gate we used is classified for military use and kept confidential. The teleportation gate accessible to the general public of the Light Tribe is located elsewhere. They probably escaped through that gate.”

“So, are the monsters pursuing them?”

“Most likely. The ones we see here are believed to be the troops that did not join the pursuit,” Rushia replied.

The remaining forces.

Nevertheless, there appeared to be over 30 Arachnes in this village alone.

As the discussion continued, Tamaki grew impatient and asked, “Should we charge in for now?” It seemed that the idea of remaining hidden indefinitely was no longer feasible. The decision was whether to take the risk and launch an attack.

Taking charge of the situation, I immediately cast magic on everyone. First, I cast Keen Weapon, Physical Up, Mighty Arm, and Clear Mind, as usual. For Mia and Rushia, I cast Smart Operation. Additionally, I used the Deflection Spell to grant Resistance to the Fire element.

Furthermore, I cast the Deflection Spell on Mia, who promptly activated her Fly ability, granting flight to all of us. As her body floated up, Rushia exclaimed, “Wah!” Instinctively, the silver-haired girl clung to my arm, and her ample bosom pressed against it more than I anticipated.

Arisu glared at me with a “hmph.” Wait a minute, this was a necessary emergency evacuation. But even so, you seem fine with having a harem, yet you can get quite jealous, huh?

Of course, Arisu's jealousy was a reward in itself.



“Kazu-san, you're grinning,” Arisu said, pouting her lips.

“Oops, sorry. I got carried away,” I replied, realizing my excitement had gotten the best of me.

I quickly assigned roles to the team members. “Tamaki, be cautious of the spider threads and draw the enemy's attention. Arisu and Mia, provide support from behind. Rushia, stay with me.” Wanting to ensure the ethics of the Light Tribe were respected, I asked Rushia, “If we were to destroy this entire village in order to defeat the enemy, would it be resented?”

Rushia responded, “If it were absolutely necessary, I would defend your actions. However, unnecessarily destroying the forest is not something they would appreciate.”

Understanding their preference to avoid unnecessary destruction, I pondered the fate of any surviving villagers. Rushia revealed, “They may be offered as sacrifices to the monster you all refer to as the Globster.”

Realizing the gravity of the situation, I decided to focus on eliminating the enemy peacefully. I commanded Tamaki to act swiftly using Haste, and she complied eagerly. As Tamaki leaped out of the grass, her body glowing red, she launched herself towards the three Arachne perched on a tree.

Before the Arachne could react, Mia unleashed Lightning Arrows, targeting each of them individually. The arrows caused sharp pain to the Arachne upon impact, momentarily distracting Tamaki. However, she quickly regained her focus and closed in on the enemies. With a swift swing of her white sword, it seemed as if the blade had extended, effortlessly splitting one of the Arachne in two.

Confused by the incredible display, I questioned what had just happened. Meanwhile, Mia nonchalantly stated, “Mm, I leveled up.”

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In the aftermath of the battle, Tamaki excitedly showcased her newfound skill, jumping up and down in the white room. Although I observed her with a sense of amazement, a lingering concern remained.

I patted her head for the time being, but then paused.

“I didn't use it earlier because it wouldn't work against Mekish Grau,”

Arisu forced a smile.

“When Tamaki-chan reached Rank 8, she gained the ability to unleash a long-distance slashing attack...”

“Wow, that's like something out of a fantasy!” Mia exclaimed, wide-eyed.

Well, it is fantasy, but I'm still amazed.

“How did you do it?” I asked.

“I felt like hitting someone far away, so I went 'Zubashaa!' and it went 'Zubaa!' and then 'Doshan!'”

“Please speak in Japanese,” I requested.

“Well, you can get the general idea, right? It's like a technique in martial arts where you strike from a distance, and it packs much more power than a normal hit.”

“Like a Hadouken or a Sonic Boom, right? It's not about logic, just that kind of thing. Rank 8 is seriously amazing...”

“But it doesn't work well against distant opponents, and it doesn't have much power. That's why I didn't use it against Mekish Grau.”

“How far can you strike with it?”

“If you use it like you did earlier, the limit is probably around 2-3 steps ahead. But if you just want to blow away your opponent, you can do it from up to 10 steps away.”

“Oh, depending on how you use it, it could be pretty useful. I'm not sure if Tamaki can be that flexible, though...”

Can anyone use this once they reach Rank 8?

Or is it the combination of Rank 8 and the White Sword's power?

Let's conduct an experiment. I'll summon a random sword and give it to Tamaki.

“Try using that long-distance technique on me with this sword,” I instructed, standing 10 steps away.

Tamaki replied confidently, “Leave it to me!” and swung the sword...

The wind pressure was incredible. It definitely seemed like Rank 8.

But that was it.

“Huh?”

“Tamaki, try it again with the White Sword.”

“Okay, got it!”

Tamaki switched to the White Sword and unleashed a slash. The light extended rapidly from a distance of 10 steps.

Before I realized it, my body was sent flying.

I crashed into the wall of the white room with a resounding impact, my back taking the brunt of it. I let out a sound resembling a crushed frog.

“Kazu, are you okay?”

“W-wah, Kazu!”

Arisu and Tamaki rushed over to me.

Tamaki, with teary eyes, shouldn't worry too much since I had asked her to do it. As I looked down at my stomach, I noticed a black sooty streak on my shirt. Was this the power of the long-distance strike? Or perhaps an additional ability of the white sword? General never demonstrated this kind of power, though... Wait, I remember.

“Could it be that Tamaki amplified the power of the white sword by snapping her fingers?”

The strike that tore off Mia's arm left an unforgettable impact. Despite just throwing a stone, its destructive power was immense. Maybe it was the power of the white sword.

When I took the white sword from her, Tamaki had already sealed the finger-snapping, so I didn't realize it at the time. Well, the truth remains unknown for now, and it might be a trivial matter.

“Um, Kazu, can I try throwing a stone with a bang too?” Tamaki asked.

“Don't do it, don't do it. Tamaki, you don't have to complicate things. Just focus on cutting down the enemy in front of you with your sword,” I advised her.

“Okay, got it! Hey, why are Arisu and Mia looking at me with such lukewarm eyes too?” Tamaki questioned, her confusion evident.

I patted Tamaki's head, trying to reassure her. It's alright, that's fine for you. As they say, the more foolish a child is, the cuter they are.

Shifting my attention to Rushia, I addressed her. “If you have something to say, say it now.”

Rushia, who had been silently observing our exchange, seemed taken aback by my words. We fell into an awkward silence for a while. Well, I guess I'll address it directly.

“For example, it seemed like you were curious about why I was so scared of that one soldier earlier, right?”

Rushia nodded. ““Yes, Kazu, you seemed like a timid civilian at first, but when it comes to fighting, you can see the battlefield more calmly than anyone and make accurate judgments.””

“Just two days ago, I was indeed a timid civilian. We survived these last three days thanks to the skill system. But my heart doesn't grow like a skill. Maybe it would have been different if I had Clear Mind, but unfortunately, the bestowed magic had worn off at that time. I'm just a flesh-and-blood person after all,” I explained.

“You are terribly unbalanced, aren't you?” Rushia remarked.

“Yes, please understand that too... Maybe you would be better at commanding than me,” I replied.

Rushia shook her head. “Even with just three days of experience, you have gained years of experience that an ordinary person wouldn't have in that time. You can recognize someone skilled in fighting when you see them. On the other hand, I missed the timing to use the magic I had acquired.”

I understood her point. I had killed countless orcs and hobgoblins, and even faced Mekish Grau, a divine weapon, without fear. When it comes to fighting monsters, Rushia probably has the upper hand.

“Don't worry, Kazu. I have no intention of taking your place. Even if you're inexperienced outside of battle, I'll assist you from behind the scenes. However, if I may say one thing... as a commander, please be confident. Just by being confident, the soldiers of the Light Race who have witnessed our troops in action will be encouraged,” Rushia reassured me.

I understood her point. Perhaps that soldier was angry because he was expecting a strong ally and ended up with someone like me who appeared weak. I shrugged my shoulders, letting go of the concern for now. We needed to focus on the situation at hand.

There was something else I wanted to inquire about. “Could you tell me more about the Globster? Ah, I just remembered it was mentioned earlier. What exactly is it...?”

Lucía lowered her eyes and fell silent for a moment, as if contemplating her response. After shaking her head a few times, she lifted her face to meet my gaze. “The Globster is a weapon that aims to bring an end to everything. It is the very motive behind the monsters' invasion,” she explained, her hand tightly clenched against her chest.

Chapter 98: Battle in the World Tree Forest - Part 2

Rushia proceeded to elaborate on the Globster, describing it as the wedge the monsters had driven into their land. Although the principle behind it was unclear, it was known to convert the energy of female sacrifices to function as a teleportation gate. In addition, when combined with tokens, it could create specific monsters. This might have been what Arisu and the others witnessed in the cave with the bees—girls impregnated with bee eggs by the Globster. It was a disturbing revelation.

“Is it only women who can be sacrificed?” I asked.

“According to the reports, that seems to be the case. However, I have never witnessed it myself,” Lucía replied, indicating that such a gruesome sight would not be shown to us.

Even on our mountain, the orcs only abducted girls to their caves. It appeared that only women could be sacrificed to the Globster. It was a world governed by some arbitrary rule involving mana, and it was best not to dwell on it.

Regardless, the fact remained that the Globster served as the linchpin for the monster invasion force. “If the Globster is left untouched, that land will become a stronghold for monsters. As long as there is energy for the teleportation gate, new monsters can be summoned continuously. If multiple strategic-level monsters like Mekish Grau are summoned, it would be nearly impossible to retake the area,” Lucía explained.

I nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation. In the previous battle at Hesh Resh Nash, the hobgoblin captain desperately summoned the Globster, but it could only summon one Mekish Grau. Had the town been occupied and women offered as sacrifices, multiple Mekish Grau might have been summoned.

“If there were a Globster here right now... it would indeed pose a significant problem,” I remarked, acknowledging the potential danger it presented.

“Yes, we don't know the conditions for the appearance of the Globster, but if multiple god-level monsters were to appear in this 23rd district, it would be inevitable to abandon this area,” Lucía explained.

I questioned whether they had any plans to reclaim the area. Lucía replied, “If we sever this area from the teleportation gate network, we won't have to worry about monsters appearing at the center of the World Tree. We can't afford to waste our strength unnecessarily today. The decisive battle is tomorrow.”

Oh, right. Tomorrow is the day when something akin to the end of the world is supposed to occur. For Leen and the other leaders, the lives of 100 soldiers are more crucial than those of 1000 civilians. After all, if they fail tomorrow, the people on this continent will lose everything.

“In addition, Globsters transform the world. Many countries have been turned into eerie demon realms after long periods of monster occupation,” Lucía continued.

“Demon realms...” I muttered, trying to envision what that would entail.

“A world of foul-smelling plains, forests teeming with eerie creatures akin to the depths of hell, and murky poison lakes... It's said to be a terrifying world,” Lucía described.

So it's like turning ordinary land into a putrid sea. I wondered how long it would take for such a transformation to occur if left unchecked. In the case of our mountain, we managed to eliminate it by the morning of the third day...

“Well, in that case, let's quickly locate the Globster and crush it,” I said determinedly.

“Yes, leave it to me! I'll smash that disgusting thing to bits!” Tamaki exclaimed, her usual energy undeterred. Well, I looked forward to her enthusiasm.

Mia, on the other hand, had no skill points to spare, so we decided to return to our original location.

Mia	
LEVEL:	EARTH MAGIC:

20	4
WIND MAGIC: 7	SKILL POINTS: 2

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As we returned from the white room, Tamaki swiftly dispatched the remaining two spider-human hybrids with her sword. At the moment she defeated the first Arachne, it transformed into a gemstone. There was only one blue gemstone.

“Wow, just one of them holds the same power as an elite. It's definitely impossible for regular soldiers,” Tamaki thought to herself.

The treetop town grew noisy as Arachnes emerged from the hollows of various trees. Following the plan, Tamaki didn't venture too far and rushed towards the two approaching Arachnes across the bridge. The Arachnes halted and simultaneously expelled bundles of white threads from their mouths.

“Waah!”

With momentum, Tamaki charged into the unfolding spider threads and was elegantly ensnared in a human-sized white cocoon.

“I warned you enough!”

However, fortunately, the distance between us and Tamaki was about 30 meters, well within the range of attack magic.

“Rushia, Fire Arrow. Target: Tamaki,” I commanded.

“Eh...? Y-Yes,” Rushia hesitated for a moment but followed my orders, releasing five arrows of Fire Arrow. All five arrows hit Tamaki, who was caught in the white thread cocoon.

The cocoon caught fire, but Tamaki had a resistance spell cast on herself, so it shouldn't have caused significant damage. As expected, Tamaki exclaimed, “It's hot!” and broke out of the cocoon. She swung her white sword, scattering the

burning spider threads in all directions. Some of the flames even reached the Arachnes, causing them to frantically try to extinguish the fire on their bodies.

According to Rushia, heavy rain fell in this area yesterday, and the trees absorbed a large amount of water from their roots. The bark was moist as well, so the tree branches didn't catch fire.

“Now's the time, Arisu, Mia,” I called out.

“Yes!” Arisu charged forward, while Mia's Lightning Arrow pierced through the Arachnes.

Tamaki spun around in the air, appearing dizzy and disoriented.

“Fuahh, Kazu-san, help me—”

Hey, come on...

Well, I guess I am playing my role as bait.

Arisu's thrust pierced through the heart of one of the Arachnes, and I leveled up.

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As soon as we arrived in the white room, Arisu expressed concern for Tamaki, who had turned into a flaming torch.

“Are you okay, Tamaki-chan?”

“Don't worry! Thanks to the Resistance spell, I didn't get hurt!” She assured her.

“I'm sorry, Tamaki. But at that moment, I thought it was the best thing to do,” I apologized.

“I know, Kazu-san. But—” Tamaki started to speak but then looked up at me with puppy eyes and smiled.

“I want you to comfort me plenty later,” she said.

“Ah, sure, of course. Until you feel better, Tamaki,” I responded. I patted her on the head for now, and she closed her eyes in pleasure. Well, that should be

enough for now.

“Then, I'm going to level up my Summoning Magic,” I announced.

“Won't you level up support?” Arisu asked, looking bewildered. Now that we had a party of five, giving them support magic would significantly increase our fighting power, if only there were more of us in the vanguard, but we had three people in the rear guard.

“There are a lot of enemies, and if we had a handy shield, Arisu could fight as a middle guard. In exchange, a familiar can provide support for Tamaki. It's not good for Tamaki to be isolated alone,” I explained.

“Oh, yeah, that makes sense,” Arisu responded.

“Eh, what? Why are Kazu and Arisu looking at each other as if they can read each other's minds?” Tamaki wondered aloud.

Even though they should have already understood everything from the recent battles... That child is really accident-prone when left alone. Well, I guess that's also what's good about her. At least the ability to rush into unknown enemies without being too cautious is a kind of talent. If it were Mia, she would have been too cautious.

“A talent that needs to be carefully exploited,” I commented.

“Is that so...” Rushia tilted her head. Well, it's fine not to understand. This strange sense of trust.

And so, I raised my summoning magic to rank 8.

KAZUHISA	
LEVEL: 26	SUPPORT MAGIC: 5
SUMMONING MAGIC: 7 → 8	SKILL POINTS: 9 → 1

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We returned to our original location right away. The remaining enemy was killed by the second lightning arrow Mia released, falling to the ground and dying. It transformed into a blue gem.

“Good, things are going smoothly.”

However, the enemy had already noticed us and was gathering from all directions. In this situation, we needed more frontline fighters.

“Summon Greater Elemental: Fire!”

In response to my call, a giant over 2 and a half meters tall, enveloped in flames, appeared. The giant's hands gripped a long, curved sword wrapped in flames.

This rank 8 summoning magic was an advanced version of the rank 5 Elemental Summoning. The Fire Elemental that appeared this time was one size larger than the rank 5 version, and its combat power was significantly different. The combat power of familiars was generally ranked minus 2, so this Fire Elemental should be as strong as Arisu.

“Mia, attack this one...”

“Okay, Fly!”

Mia's flight magic brought the Fire Elemental's body floating gently in the air. I also cast Keen Weapon, Physical Up, and Mighty Arm on the Fire Elemental.

“Arisu, step back! The Fire Elemental will take Tamaki's place as your support! Go!”

“Understood, Master.”

The Fire Elemental nodded in a low voice and soared up. Rushia, Mia, and I rose carefully guarded by Arisu.

Meanwhile, Tamaki and the Fire Elemental rushed to the weak point in the enemy's formation, scattering destruction. After defeating another Arachne, Rushia announced, “I leveled up.”

The next moment, we were transported to a white room.

Chapter 99: Battle in the World Tree Forest - Part 3

“**A**rachne's experience points are equivalent to five orcs for sure,” I verified the experience points and nodded in agreement.

Oh, so that means they're the same as Elite Orcs. Are they weaker than the Elite... I wonder.

No, it's just that we've become so strong we can't remember how strong the Elite Orcs were. They were still scary enemies at this time yesterday though.

Rushia awkwardly tapped the Enter key with her white hand, and we left the white room.

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Fire Elementals protected Tamaki's back as she and one other person battled against the group of Arachnes. The terrain of the battlefield also worked in Tamaki's favor. On the narrow bridge, only one Arachne could attack from the front and back at a time. Arachnes had spider-like lower bodies, so they were considerably wider than humans. As a result, there was congestion among the group of over 20 enemies.

“All right, this is easy!” Tamaki shouted. Hey, that's a flag.

Whether it was because she raised a flag or just coincidental timing, the Arachnes suddenly retreated like the tide.

“Huh, what's going on?” Tamaki was bewildered at the sudden turn of events.

The Arachnes scattered around the bridges around them simultaneously spit out threads. The threads were not wide in viscosity. Thick and long threads pierced through the air above Tamaki's head and stuck to the trees in front of them.

Immediately after, the Arachnes jumped. Like wire action, they used their threads as ropes to propel themselves. Some individuals jumped a distance of up to 20 meters, while others jumped 10 meters, attacking Tamaki from all directions.

This is bad.

“Mia, anti-gravity! Rushia, attack!”

“Okay. Reverse Gravity.”

“Fire Storm!”

Thanks to Mia's wind magic rank 7, gravity disappeared around Tamaki. Tamaki wrapped herself up with the power of Fly and gripped the edge of the bridge with her left hand.

The Arachnes, who had jumped diagonally upward considering gravity, passed above Tamaki, their target.

There, Rushia's fire magic rank 6, Flame Storm, struck.

The Arachnes are burned by the raging flames, their threads are burnt, and they are further burned by the fire. They writhe in agony as they pass over Tamaki's head and collide with the trees in front of them. They fall helplessly to the ground, with some bodies turning into blue jewels upon impact. Only three of them barely stick to the tree trunk.

“Mia, Lightning Arrow!” “Rushia, Flame Arrow!”

Mia and Rushia unleash their lightning and fire arrows, piercing through the dying Arachnes one after another. The Arachnes that were finished off fall to the ground one by one, meeting the same fate as their comrades.

Tamaki returns to the bridge, expressing her relief and gratitude. Arisu supports her, recognizing the danger they just faced. However, before they can fully relax, two Arachnes wearing green robes emerge from the woods, pointing at Tamaki in unison.

Confusion washes over Tamaki, causing her to falter on the tree bridge. Arisu rushes to catch her, barely preventing her from falling off. It seems Tamaki has lost even the power to fly, despite having the ability.

I glare at the Arachnes in green robes, ready to take action. However, before I can give any orders, Mia and Rushia unleash their attack spells. But the Mage Arachne reacts quickly, creating a rainbow-colored film in front of her, reflecting the spells.

Realizing the danger, I step forward to protect the group. I create a rainbow-colored barrier to reflect Mia's Lightning Arrow, but it's too late to defend against Rushia's Fire Storm. We get hit head-on, though the damage is minimized by the resistance spell.

The double-reflected lightning arrow strikes Mage Arachne once again, piercing through her body. This time, she is unable to deflect it. Both Mage Arachnes meet their demise, pierced through their entire bodies.

The Mage Arachnes writhe in agony and emit cries of pain.

“That was a close call.”

“I can't believe monsters can use reflection...”

Prior to that, Tamaki was briefly stunned by some kind of magic. It felt reminiscent of the spell “Candle Days,” a bewitching magic that confuses opponents, displaying similar symptoms. Candle Days creates a flame that induces a hazy state in the target.

However, this time, Tamaki doesn't perceive any flames around her, suggesting it was a different spell altogether. It could be something beyond the range of skills and systems we are familiar with.

Did they employ granting magic in conjunction with a spell from a different category? Or perhaps they possess their own unique system of magic, such as Arachne Magic?

Regardless, it's a nuisance. Let's deal with them swiftly.

“Fire Elemental, charge in! Tamaki, how are you...?”

“I'm fine! You did a great job!”

Tamaki retrieves her sword.

The Fire Elemental and Tamaki charge towards the weakened Mage Arachnes. Simultaneously, regular Arachnes rush towards us from the bridge.

Let's summon additional reinforcements.

“Summon Greater Wind Elemental: Wind.”

In response to my summons, a semi-transparent, beautiful woman with long, blue hair materializes.

It's a Greater Wind Elemental.

“Create turbulence on the bridge.”

“Yes, master.”

She follows my instructions and generates a powerful gust. The bridge leading to us trembles under the force of the strong wind. The Arachnes find themselves stranded on the bridge. They will likely escape by converting their thick threads into ropes, but these precious seconds are valuable.

“Charge at the Arachnes. Your objective is to cause chaos, not necessarily defeat them,” I order.

“Understood, Master.”

The Wind Elemental dances through the air, launching attacks against the Arachnes on the bridge. As the Wind Elemental approaches, the Arachnes unleash a volley of arrows, but in an instant, a whirlwind envelops the Wind Elemental. The wind barrier deflects all the arrows, ensuring not a single one reaches the ethereal entity.

The spider threads fare no better. Unable to penetrate the wind barrier, the white threads scatter around the Wind Elemental, evading her left and right.

The Arachnes might consider leaping from the unstable bridge, but without caution, they risk an uncertain fall. Thus, a stalemate ensues.

The Wind Elemental avoids rashly advancing, instead focusing on forcing the Arachnes into a struggle from a distance beyond the reach of their spears. It's a shrewd approach.

Now is the opportune moment... I redirect my gaze to Tamaki and the others. Tamaki has just reached the Mage Arachne and slashes at the creature from above with her white sword.

Mage Arachne screams and attempts to distance herself, but Mia's paralysis magic, “Electric Stun,” restricts her movements. Tamaki, determined despite her torn clothing, swings her sword. Mage Arachne resists and rolls around, evading the attacks.

The left arm of the spider-humanoid is severed, and blue blood dances in the air. Tamaki tries to pursue and swing her sword again...

“Tamaki, watch out for Reflection!” I impulsively shout.

Almost simultaneously, Mage Arachne thrusts her remaining right hand forward. However...

“Even I can do it!”

Tamaki adjusts the timing of her sword swing slightly. She takes a half step back and shifts her weight, executing a skillful feint. Falling for the bait, Mage Arachne creates a rainbow-colored barrier in front of her.

Similar to mine, the barrier lasts only for a brief moment. If Arachne misses that window, she will be defenseless. Tamaki delivers a flawless sideways slash at the perfect moment, severing Mage Arachne's head. The lifeless Arachne drops three blue gems.

“Level up,” Rushia announces.

※ ※ ※

We make our way to the white room. This time, I save my skill points. For now, I'll praise Tamaki's performance.

“You've done exceptionally well, Tamaki,” I say as I stroke her head.

“But please remain cautious, okay?”

“I understand, I'll be careful!” Tamaki responds with a cheerful laugh. Though I wonder if she truly comprehends... I'm concerned, but getting caught up in the details is pointless. We promptly exit the white room.

RUSHIA	

LEVEL: 12	FIRE MAGIC: 6
SKILL POINTS: 3	

※ ※ ※

Just after returning to our original location.

Rushia supports the Fire Elemental to corner the other Mage Arachne. She inflicts wounds with Flame Arrows and creates a ring of flames with Flame Bind to restrain her.

The Mage Arachne also casts magic towards them, extending shadowy tentacles from beneath our feet.

I panic and take to the air, but Rushia gets entangled by the tentacles and screams.

Her struggling figure is captivating... No, that's not the time for such thoughts!

“Arisu, Dispel!”

“Yes, Dispel.”

Arisu casts Dispel, a rank 3 healing magic. It is a counter-magic that removes spells cast in the area. The tentacles of shadows vanish under the purifying light Arisu unleashes. Rushia, freed from restraint, quickly distances herself from the danger.

Now, looking at the remaining Mage, who was isolated without any protectors, it was already too late for her as she was attacked by the Fire Elemental, and blue blood scattered in the air.

“Hmm. Let's use Electric Stun on this one too.”

Mia provided support as needed, and Tamaki, who had already defeated the first Mage Arachne, joined in.

At this point, there was no longer any chance of victory for the Mage Arachne who had been cut off from reinforcements. In the end, Tamaki dealt the

finishing blow to her as well.

“I feel like I didn't contribute much...” Arisu chuckled.

“Level up!”

“That's right!”

“Hmm.”

They all leveled up simultaneously once again.

Chapter 100: Battle in the World Tree Forest - Part 4

Tamaki, Arisu, and Mia all reached level 21 at the same time. This might not come as a surprise, considering there was only a 30-point difference in experience between Tamaki and Arisu, and a 20-point difference between Arisu and Mia.

On the other hand, defeating one Arachne grants 60 experience points, and if it's a Mage Arachne, it would probably be worth almost 200 points.

“By the way, Rushia. We've defeated the Arachne boss, but do you think they'll retreat?”

Rushia shook her head.

“Arachnes who use magic are not their leaders. The leader of the Arachnes is usually an individual of the vanguard type called a Champion.”

Oh, I see.

Oh, and Rushia just mentioned that there is a Champion. Does that mean the automatic translation is following naming conventions...?

“By the way, besides Mages and Champions, are there any other types of Arachnes?”

“I've heard there are individuals called Jumpers who specialize in jumping abilities. There are also rumors of individuals called Legends who are extremely formidable. Some dismiss it as the delusions of soldiers who have encountered them... However, if Legends do exist, their terrifying combat power would undoubtedly be classified at the level of divine weaponry.”

Wow, what's that? Divine weaponry level means something like Mekish Grau, right?

If something like that were to appear alongside the legion...

It would be no joke. Mekish Grau was just one individual, so we barely managed to achieve victory. If we had to face enemies of that caliber in the midst of chaos, it would be incredibly challenging.

“But if there's a boss, it's strange that it hasn't shown up yet, right?”

Tamaki made a valid point.

“Um, the Arachne who was in that location went after the main force of the Light People's soldiers, and the rest of them...”

“Well, Mia, the Champion is likely to be commanding the main force. Even if there are Legends, they are likely to be on that side.”

In other words, Rushia smiles and says,

“We have several options. One of them is to gain experience and achievements by strategically attacking enemy forces that have separated from the main force, like we did just now. Leen will also be pleased with our increased influence. The main force of the Light People will have a tough time, but it's a minor concern.”

“Oh, that's awesome!”

Mia raises both hands and cheers happily.

Why are you so happy about it?

Or rather, I feel like I've seen this person's smile somewhere before...

“Rushia reminds me of Shiki-san.”

“Even Leen is quite similar, and so is Rushia.”

“Oh, you think so too? Actually, I thought the same thing.”

Arisu hesitantly speaks up.

Unusually for her, she's being sarcastic. Well, maybe she doesn't intend it as sarcasm herself.

“In that case, we should continue exploring this city and focus on searching for survivors and the Globster. Defeating the Globster is a strategic objective that must be achieved, and rescuing survivors will enhance our reputation.”

“Yeah, Rushia. You're like the second coming of Shiki.”

Mia nods in agreement and puts her hand on Rushia's shoulder.

Rushia tilts her head in surprise.

If the transfer gate to the mountain opens smoothly, I'll bring them together immediately...

Now then, I'm observing Rushia's behavior.

Is she deliberately trying to provoke me like this, considering the treatment I received from the soldiers earlier?

There should be appropriate payback for those who underestimated me.

Yes, maybe they're testing me while luring me with their words.

They want to see how much I'm swayed by emotions and how far I can make rational judgments even when my pride is hurt.

Actually, I'd like to believe that my thoughts don't get clouded by that level of provocation... Yesterday evening, I was even angrier. I simulated the scenario where Shiba took Arisu away from me and still didn't kill him...

In the end, I decided that there was no benefit in letting him live.

It was a decision I made after careful consideration, and Shiki-san agreed with me.

So, probably. I won't make a mistake in my judgment this time either.

“Let's confirm our basic strategy. Even if the Arachne escapes, we won't pursue her. Let's be satisfied with occupying their base.”

This time, we'll focus on accumulating skill points.

Let's return to our original location.

ARISU	
LEVEL: 21	SPEARMANSHIP: 6
HEALING MAGIC:	SKILL POINTS:

5	6
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TAMAKI	
LEVEL: 21	SWORDSMANSHIP: 8
STRENGTH: 1	SKILL POINTS: 5

MIA	
LEVEL: 21	EARTH MAGIC: 4
WIND MAGIC: 7	SKILL POINTS: 4

※ ※ ※

Right after returning from the white room, the Arachne start to scatter in confusion.

Well, it's no surprise they're running away after their Mage was defeated. And now their commanding officer is gone, they don't stand a chance anyway.

It's too much trouble to bother with them one by one, so this is just perfect.

I instruct my familiars not to pursue them too far.

But before I give that order, the Greater Wind Elemental crushes one of the Arachne with a lightning strike.

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After all the enemies had fled,

I summon five crows in addition to my two familiars and send them to scout the hollows of the trees, giving them night vision with the Deflection Spell. Even if there are enemies lurking or traps set, it wouldn't be a problem if the familiars were destroyed.

Soon, one of the crows that had been peering into the hollows of the large trees returns. According to telepathy, there is a Globster inside.

We all tense up at once.

“Tamaki, Arisu, approach with caution and keep an eye out for any monsters that the Globster may have summoned. If it gets dangerous, fly away.”

I give the order again, along with the Fly spell.

Mia, Rushia, and I follow behind Tamaki and Arisu.

There is no ambush as we had feared. There is a hollow in the tree that is about the size of a classroom, and in the center is a creepy pulsating mass of flesh.

It is Globster.

A disgusting odor mixed with the scent of excrement and sweetness emanates from the dimly lit space. The smell makes me want to wrinkle my nose.

I could hear the moans and gasps of women. As I had expected, multiple women were trapped within the mass of flesh that was Globster. Judging from the presence of four ears on its face, it was likely that they were members of the Light Tribe. Whenever Globster pulsed, the women would emit screams of pain or pleasure, their sweat glistening on their pale skin as sunlight streamed into the hollow.

Unconsciously, I made a noise in my throat and was met with disapproving glares from Arisu and Tamaki.

“Well, Kazuchii is a boy after all. It can't be helped,” remarked Mia.

“Mia, there's no need for you to adopt the role of the knowledgeable woman in a place like this.”

Regardless, our priority was to help these women escape their predicament. Considering their previous experience in dealing with a similar situation, it might be safer to entrust this task to Arisu and Tamaki. With that in mind, I gave them instructions.

“Come on, Mia. Let's check the other tree hollows just in case. Some residents might still be hiding, scared even if the familiars have already searched for them,” I said, pulling Mia along with me.

“Aw, I want to see too. For future reference,” Mia replied.

“What future reference?” I asked, rolling my eyes.

“Rushia, I want you to supervise the rescue operation and take care of the people we've saved,” I instructed Rushia.

“Understood. Please be careful,” Rushia replied.

To be honest, I just wanted an excuse to leave that place. Witnessing women in such a state was discomfoting. Although it was natural to experience primal desires, I couldn't help but feel sorry for them, enduring such pain and anguish.

“If you're feeling aroused, Kazu...” Mia started to say something inappropriate.

I gave her a flick on the forehead. “This is still a battlefield. Don't entertain unnecessary thoughts. You'll only invite trouble.”

“Eh? What are you talking about, Kazu? You always mix up reality and fantasy,” Mia replied, shrugging.

I wished I could wipe that smile off her face with a punch.

“Let's take this seriously. Being ambushed right after we think we've won is the scariest thing,” I said.

“Yeah, it would be great if we could sense any presence around us. I wouldn't mind having my brother here right now,” Mia replied.

Ah, having a ninja around would be reliable in situations like this.

“I can utilize Earth Element or Wind Element if we're on solid ground or can read the flow of the wind. However, it's impossible to do so within a tree like

this,” I explained.

“There's the Invisible Scout spell, but...” Mia trailed off.

The Invisible Scout spell summoned an invisible scout familiar for reconnaissance. It was a level 8 summon magic. While the familiar excelled in stealth and reconnaissance abilities, it possessed no combat capabilities. Constantly expending 64 MP for scouting would be challenging given the current situation. However, if we were caught off guard, we would be in serious trouble.

“If we get caught off guard, we're done for,” I said, my concern mirroring Mia's.

“Exactly,” she agreed.

“I don't want to deplete Fire Elle's HP unnecessarily. Arisu and Rushia can handle the healing, and if we can locate the enemy first, we can strike first and secure victory using Rushia's firepower without relying too heavily on magic spells.”

I admired Mia's ability to swiftly calculate and determine the best tactical response in the heat of the moment. She was truly remarkable.

“In that case... it might be a good idea to deploy three familiars,” I suggested, considering our options.

As we discussed various tactical approaches, we continued to explore the ravaged city where we had suffered a crushing defeat. The lifeless bodies of the Light Tribe were scattered everywhere, and we made sure to gather any scattered gems, whether they belonged to the defeated enemies or were remnants of our previous battles. In total, we collected 21 blue gems, adding to our existing count of 810 tokens. With this, we had a decent amount that could potentially be used for a valuable purchase in the near future. However, there might be other urgent needs that required our attention.

“Hmm, it's a difficult situation,” I mused.

“Saving up until Rushia's magic power is released is also a good option,” Mia suggested.

“But that's 2000 tokens,” I responded, acknowledging the substantial amount required to unlock Rushia's special ability, Magic Power Release. Mia, who would benefit from this power-up, didn't seem convinced that utilizing offensive magic spells would be the best course of action.

“For now, we don't need it. But someday, we might face an enemy that necessitates its use,” Mia explained.

I pondered the implications of her words. It meant that there could be foes stronger than Mekish Grau, potentially even immune to Rushia's fiery magic. The thought was unnerving. We couldn't accurately gauge the upper limits of our adversaries' combat prowess. While our skill ranks were currently capped at 9, the monsters continued to grow stronger, creating a nightmarish scenario.

“It's okay. We'll figure something out,” Mia reassured me, perhaps sensing my underlying concerns. She wore a comforting smile, levitated slightly with Fly magic, and skillfully stroked my head from above.

I found solace in her actions, feeling a sense of reassurance wash over me.

Chapter 101: Battle in the World Tree Forest - Part 5

After careful consideration, I decided to summon Invisible Scout. However, despite expecting a transparent familiar to materialize in front of me, I couldn't see it. Resigned to this limitation, I cast See Invisibility, a spell with a casting rank of 3, on myself. Although it could only be used on me, its effects would last for an extended period. Given my current skill level, I estimated that I would be able to see through transparent objects for at least two and a half hours.

In front of my newly visible eyes, a black, hunched-over humanoid creature came into view. It wasn't a new creature, but rather the Invisible Scout that had been present all along, now rendered visible by my spell. However, its form remained indistinct, with faint outlines and unclear facial expressions, likely inherent to its nature.

"Please check the surroundings of the village for any nearby enemies," I instructed the Invisible Scout.

"Yes, my lord," it replied in a female voice before swiftly darting away at incredible speed. It vanished from my sight, leaving me to ponder its gender, although ultimately, it didn't hold much significance.

I contemplated the cost of using 64 MP solely for reconnaissance. Was it truly worth it? In this instance, I resorted to the Invisible Scout because I had no knowledge of the enemy's scattered whereabouts. Perhaps I should have enlisted some reconnaissance troops from the Light Tribe, despite their abandonment during the negotiations. Regardless, dwelling on it wouldn't change the current situation.

Returning to the hollow tree where the Globster had been, I found the rescued women seated against the wall, naked and visibly drained. I averted my gaze, not wishing to intrude on their vulnerable state. The Globster was no longer present, indicating that Arisu and the others had successfully defeated it.

When defeated, it transformed into a yellow gem, worth 100 tokens—a profitable outcome.

However, the Globster yielded no experience points. Although it appeared devoid of combat capabilities, numerous mysteries still surrounded it.

“All eight individuals taken in by the Globster have been rescued,” Arisu reported.

“According to Rushia, they were released shortly after being captured by the Globster. That might explain it,” she continued.

“Good to hear. By the way, we also saved those children from the mountain on the third morning,” I mentioned.

“Yes, if the sacrifices are held for less than half a day, there's a lower chance of them losing their sanity. It takes at least a full day to accumulate enough energy for transference, and using more power requires even more time,” Arisu explained.

I understood now. This was why the enemy couldn't recklessly summon the Globster. Exposing their vulnerability for at least a day was a prerequisite. When we defeated the Globster, only two days had passed, making it a perilous situation.

“But when the enemy summoned the Globster in the flooded town, it immediately summoned Mekish Grau,” I pointed out.

“Perhaps they had a prepared individual nearby, who had already taken in enough sacrifices. There have been reports of surprise attacks like that. However, in such cases, the Globster would be left exhausted due to the backlash,” Arisu continued.

I grasped the concept. If they were adequately prepared, it was possible to execute such a maneuver. This time, we had caught the enemy off guard, capitalizing on their lack of anticipation. It was our ability to exploit their carelessness that had allowed us to prevail.

Naturally, a large army of Light Tribe soldiers would find it challenging to defeat the Arachne defending this location without being noticed by the enemy's main force. It's unlikely that a force of 100 soldiers could successfully

infiltrate and attack without detection. Our advantage lies in our small numbers and overwhelming strength, allowing us to stealthily maneuver behind the enemy. At present, the monsters don't anticipate our exceptional abilities. So, what should our next move be?

“I wonder if the main force of the Light Tribe is currently engaged in battle with the enemy,” I inquire of Rushia.

The silver-haired girl with red eyes ponders for a moment, placing her hand on her chin before responding. “Based on what we observed earlier, they will have to engage in battle at least once to quell the soldiers' growing discontent.”

“So the commander doesn't wish to fight, but it seems they have no choice,” I remark.

“Ideally, they would prefer to conserve their strength for tomorrow's strategy,” Rushia explains.

The soldiers are filled with fervor. We recently experienced their disruptive behavior. Although it was bothersome, we must understand that their actions stem from a strong desire to protect their homeland. We must not mistake them for our enemies.

The Light Tribe soldiers cast cold glances at us, but their hostility is merely a byproduct of their determination to defend their land. They can still be valuable assets. Therefore, there is only one course of action we should take.

I lift my head and address the group. “We will launch a surprise attack on the Arachne main force, which is currently engaged in battle against the Light Tribe. By striking from both sides, we can defeat the enemy.”

I establish our future plan of action and survey the expressions of everyone present. Arisu and Tamaki nod with unwavering trust. Mia contemplates for a moment before tilting her head. “Hmm, it depends on the enemy's numbers, doesn't it?”

“Rushia, do you have any information on the number of Arachne?” I inquire.

“According to the rescued individuals from the Globster, there are at most around 500 Arachne,” Rushia reveals.

That aligns with Leen's previous estimation. If the enemy consists solely of weaker individuals, we might have a chance. However, considering the presence of mages, champions, and legendary beings, known only through rumors, it would be reckless for us to face the entire enemy force alone.

Let's approach this from a different perspective. We will focus on eliminating the most formidable individuals, such as mages, champions, and legends, who pose the greatest threat to the Light Tribe.

This is where the Invisible Scout proves invaluable. While the Arachne swarm is engaged in battle with the Light Tribe, the Invisible Scout will scout the enemy's location.

After explaining my idea to everyone, we agree that the basic plan is to snipe the boss and quickly retreat, repeating this strategy. Rushia calmly acknowledges that it's a good strategy but points out the high level of risk involved. She raises concerns about the capability of the Light Tribe to fight against the Arachne and asks for further guidance.

I propose that we intervene when the Light Tribe's army is on the brink of collapse, and the Arachne begin hunting down the remnants. By striking at a moment of chaos, when the Light Tribe is running in disarray, we can disperse the enemy's forces and increase our chances of success.

Rushia finds this approach brutal but acknowledges its potential safety. Monsters tend to lower their guard when they believe they have won, especially if we eliminate the boss first. Even if we find ourselves surrounded to some extent, we have confidence in our ability to handle the situation. Striking when the enemy least expects it aligns with Rushia's strategic thinking, akin to Shiki-san's right opinion.

However, I reject this approach and shake my head. I explain that we won't gain the trust of the Light Tribe with such a method. Even if we win the battle today, it won't lead to a meaningful future. Rushia smiles at me, realizing that I saw through her testing.

"I agree with that," she admits.

"You were testing me, weren't you?" I inquire.

“Yes,” she confirms.

This girl doesn't even feel guilty about it. She's just like Shiki-san in that sense. Oh well, I suppose it doesn't matter.

Curious, I ask about my score in the test.

“I'd say around 65 out of 100,” Rushia evaluates.

“Just for reference, what was the problem?” I inquire.

Rushia astutely points out the inconsistency in my approach. She suggests that I should decide whether I want to gain experience, protect the Light Tribe, or showcase our strength to them, and then take consistent actions based on that. In this system, it should be easier to level up by defeating many weak enemies, making the notion that defeating bosses is the shortcut to leveling up somewhat fallacious.

She hits the mark with her assessment. She really is just like Shiki-san.

“Okay then, what do you suggest we do based on my proposal?” I ask.

“We should aim to showcase our strength to the Light Tribe and strengthen our influence first,” Rushia suggests. “We can all use Greater Invisibility to approach the leader of the enemy group together, launch a coordinated attack to defeat them, and then quickly retreat from the remaining enemies. Afterward, we can regroup with the Light Tribe, clearing out the surrounding weaker enemies, and retreat at a suitable time. If the Light Tribe's army is wise enough, they should follow our lead and retreat from the battlefield.”

It's an impeccable plan with no flaws to criticize. What's even better is that it minimizes our risk.

As the conversation continues, I express my suspicion that Lucía might be aiming to use the Light Tribe as a shield if things become difficult.

“I wonder if she was bullied by the Light Tribe,” I think to myself as I glare at Lucía.

Rushia calmly meets my gaze and stares back at me as if she's still testing me. I can't help feeling like she's assessing my qualities in this moment.

“Ugh, it's so much pressure,” I think to myself, feeling the weight of her evaluation.

“Okay, I understand. Let's adopt your proposal. I'll count on you from now on,” Rushia says, smiling slightly at the corner of her mouth. Her smile looks a little more natural than usual.

At that moment, the Invisible Scout returns.

“My lord, I cannot find any trace of the enemy,” the Invisible Scout reports.

“Okay. Let's move,” I say, confirming the scout's findings.

Everyone except for me and Mia is surprised to hear a woman's voice from nowhere. I explain to them that I had summoned the Invisible Scout to investigate the surroundings.

“The women we saved can stay hidden here if they want,” I suggest.

“Ideally, they should hide in another tree hollow. The likelihood of monsters using this Globster to withdraw is extremely high. Please inform them of that,” Rushia adds.

“Okay, Rushia, I'll leave that to you since you are the best person for external negotiations, having received suitable education as a princess of this world.”

During this time, we quickly have a meeting, discussing our plans. Everyone prepares themselves in a few minutes. I dismiss the crows, as the Invisible Scout will suffice for surveillance. Thanks to Mia's Fly spell with Deflection, we take to the air once again.

To be continued in “Another World Survival - Min-maxing my Support and Summoning Magic Volume 5.”

Extra Edition: Yukariko Shiki Doesn't Need a Balance

Part 2

As the afternoon progressed on Day 3, our Cultural Arts Center group focused on strengthening our forces and expanding the safety zone in the middle school section. Our primary task was to eliminate the orcs and bees in the area.

Even those who had just reached level 1 earlier today were gradually improving their levels, reaching level 2 and even level 3. Some of the children who were less inclined to fight also managed to reach level 1.

During the battle, I noticed Sumire-chan, Arisu-chan and Tamaki-chan's best friend, struggling with a restrained orc. It took her around ten minutes to finally defeat it. Even though I was skilled in combat, I couldn't help but feel a twinge of sympathy for the orc that fought so desperately but couldn't find an easy death.

We continued our efforts to clear the area and increase the safety of the middle school section, aware that every victory contributed to our overall progress and the well-being of everyone in the Cultural Arts Center.

She stumbled twice while thrusting her spear and ended up covered in mud and scratches all over her body. It was a scene that made everyone who witnessed it strongly believe that this child should not be sent to the front line. However, despite her struggles, the hearts of the CAC's group remained united, which was the most important thing.

Even Sumire-chan displayed excellent management skills when it came to organizing. She efficiently took care of all 30 members of the CAC's group and created optimal parties for deployment. Her contribution made my own tasks much easier. I was swamped with responsibilities and often felt overwhelmed, but Sumire-chan's assistance allowed me to focus on establishing connections with the high school section, which was our current top priority.

To facilitate communication, we utilized the crow familiars that the children who had learned summoning magic possessed. Through these familiars, we had been able to communicate with Mia-chan's older brother on several occasions. Our plan was to meet with Tagamiya Yuuki-senpai at the entrance of the middle school section. For the meeting, we brought Nagatsuki Sakura-chan and two rear guards, as we wanted to keep the group small and focused.

As the appointed time for the meeting arrived, we heard theatrical laughter emanating from the nearby forest, capturing our attention.

"I'm Mia's older brother, an eroge maniac," the voice proclaimed.

"Wait a minute! That's in the past. It's just a hobby now!" I playfully teased in response.

Suddenly, a man dressed in ninja attire leaped out from behind a tree, exuding an impressive aura befitting his appearance.

Surprisingly, he had come alone to the meeting. I pondered whether it was due to his honed reconnaissance skills, as having others present may have hindered his abilities.

"How do you know that?!" he exclaimed in a slightly panicked manner.

"I heard it from Mia. I thought it could be advantageous for our negotiations," I replied, offering a meaningful smile and another jab.

The ninja, displaying a comedic flair, exaggeratedly took a step back, acknowledging my skill.

"You're quite skilled," he remarked.

Observing the scene, even Sakura, who typically maintained a composed expression, appeared exasperated. It took someone quite special to elicit such a reaction from her.

"Shall we get to the point, senpai? Let's discuss your favorite eroge as well as our situations and future plans," I suggested, shifting the focus to the purpose of our meeting.

"I have the urge to interject, but if I react to everything, we won't make progress. Let's start by forming a party together," the ninja proposed,

recognizing the need to maintain focus and avoid distractions.

“Sure, but are we going to randomly defeat some orcs?” I questioned, seeking clarification.

“Then it's settled,” he affirmed, providing a decisive response.

The ninja senior flicked his finger conspicuously, and in an instant, a small explosion erupted behind him. Suddenly, we found ourselves transported to a white room. I glanced at Sakura-chan, slightly perplexed. Meanwhile, Yukki-senpai crossed his arms and chuckled, his expression betraying a hint of smugness.

“I hid the nearly defeated orc in the forest! I wrapped gunpowder around its neck, flicked my right hand finger, and discreetly triggered the detonator with my left hand!” Yukki-senpai exclaimed, relishing in his elaborate performance.

“What a pointless display...” I muttered, finding his antics rather unnecessary.

“It was quite a hassle to fine-tune my experience points by moderately hunting orcs until I reached this level,” he continued, seemingly living for his jokes more than anything else. “I dare say I'm more devoted to humor than even Mia-chan.”

My patience waned, and I abandoned formalities in my response. He probably wouldn't care about that sort of thing anyway. “Well, thanks to you, we were able to arrive in this room and have a candid conversation, so I appreciate that.”

“Yes. As a modest individual, I wanted to engage in an honest discussion with Shiki-dono, who has been hailed as the top woman in the first year,” Yukki-senpai remarked, a mischievous glint in his eyes.

“Top woman? What on earth are you talking about?” I questioned, genuinely confused by his statement.

“Among certain enthusiasts, being called 'garbage' by a cross-armed Shiki-dono is considered the highest form of praise,” he explained, a sly smile playing on his lips.

Sakura-chan looked at me in silence. It wasn't true. I had never done anything of the sort.

"I respect personal hobbies," I responded curtly, attempting to dismiss his comments.

"Wait, don't misunderstand. Yukki-senpai, please refrain from making such irresponsible statements!" I implored, growing increasingly exasperated.

"Hmm, it seems it was actually true... Even the underground doujinshi had many secret fans," Yukki-senpai mused aloud.

What in the world is underground doujinshi? Ugh, forget it. Don't bother arguing!

This school harbors some seriously deep shadows, known only to a select few.

"Now, let's first discuss the current situation in the high school department," the ninja smoothly transitioned back to the main topic. I inwardly urged myself to shift my focus and concentrate.

According to his report, the high school division was divided into two groups: one led by Senior Yuuki and the other comprised of the old Shiba faction, known for their criminal records, with approximately 50 members. Additionally, the ninja faction, which previously operated covertly, now numbered around 50 members, including the sensible boys' dormitory residents. Although they held grudges against each other, a temporary truce was established while the orc roamed the school grounds.

It made logical sense. If humans fought amongst themselves, they would all stand to lose. The emergence of a new enemy on the third day heightened the sense of crisis, with the possibility of more adversaries appearing in the future. One with a normal sense of vigilance would easily comprehend this.

"The old Shiba faction still occupies the boys' dormitory and appears to be hatching a plot. The members of CAC should exercise caution," Yuuki remarked with a deep bow.

"To be honest, I wish they wouldn't bring the troubles of the high school division here," I expressed my frustration.

"I apologize for their disgraceful behavior," Yuuki responded.

If he acted too meekly as the leader, it might lead to the revelation of his own backstory and how he came to hold that position. Those who knew the truth couldn't criticize him too harshly. After all, it could be argued that the chaos in the high school division was a consequence of the Shiba faction's downfall at the hands of Kazu and Arisu. Shiba had been a terrible leader, and their actions were necessary to ensure the safety of Kazu, Arisu, and the Cultural Arts Center. There was no other choice, but...

The man standing before them had efficiently taken care of everything, including cleanup, within half a day. From what they had heard, the cohesion within the ninja faction was stronger than expected. At this rate, they could even become a more formidable force than CAC in a matter of days. In terms of numbers, the ninja faction had the upper hand.

Well, by that time, the orc would likely be thirsty.

... Although I had hoped for the eradication of the oak trees on this mountain, why did I find myself worrying about drought? Had the ninja in front of me discovered my true intentions?

“At times, Shiki-dono, you were forced into a boarding school due to excessive MMO gaming,” the ninja remarked.

“How do you know about that?! I haven't told anyone!” I exclaimed.

To be precise, I had only confided in Kazu-kun in this white room, and I couldn't fathom him sharing such information with this person.

“Do not underestimate a ninja's investigative abilities,” the ninja replied.

“You're more like a stalker than an officer.”

“Putting that aside, Shiki-dono, what are your predictions for the future of your reckless sisters?” the ninja inquired.

Kazu-kun and Mia-chan had been whisked away by Globster, while Arisu-chan and Tamaki-chan were assigned as their guards. Senior Yuuki had been informed of the entire incident.

It was understandable that he was concerned about the fate of those four remarkably strong individuals. However...

“Well, they might just return soon,” I said optimistically.

“You are quite the optimist,” the ninja remarked.

“There's no use worrying. Even if those four don't come back, they will find a way to survive. The real issue is the decrease in our fighting strength due to their absence.”

“Hmm... If Mia can raise her wind magic to rank 9, she might be able to travel the world using Shape Lightning and return here, assuming she can do it alone,” the ninja pondered.

“I understand. Even in the worst-case scenario, we can still maintain communication. I apologize for not being able to introduce you to your cherished sister.”

“If I were to meet her now, she might punch me. As long as we can ascertain her safety, that's sufficient...” the hero of the senior high school expressed, his voice trembling.

Why was Mia-chan so feared by her older brother?

End.



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